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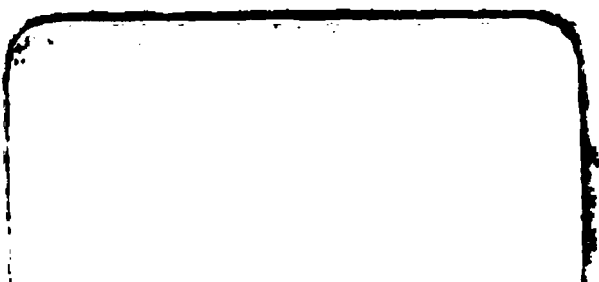
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**THE**  
**TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES.**

**MARCHANT, PRINTER, INGRAM-COURT, FENCHURCH-STREET.**

THE  
**TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES,**

**TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE.**

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**BY THE REV. THOMAS DALE, B.A.**  
**OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.**

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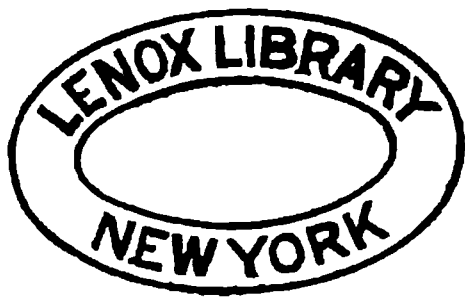
**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

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RAY W. M.  
J. C. A.  
W. A. B.

TO THE  
REV. ARTHUR WILLIAM TROLLOPE, D.D.  
HEAD MASTER OF CHRIST'S HOSPITAL,

**This Translation**

OF THE  
TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES;  
AS A SINCERE, THOUGH INADEQUATE, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
OF EARLY AND ESSENTIAL OBLIGATIONS,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HIS GRATEFUL PUPIL

AND

OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THOMAS DALE.





## INTRODUCTION.

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To trace the gradual progress of any art or science, from the infancy of its institution to the perfection of its maturity ;—to behold the rude and shapeless materials, passing through successive stages of improvement, till, like the rough marble under the hands of the experienced sculptor, they are polished into beauty and moulded into symmetry ;—is one of the most interesting speculations that can occupy the reflecting mind. This remark applies with peculiar force to the Greek Tragic Drama ; which, though mean almost beyond credibility

in its origin, attained, after the lapse of less than a century, the highest degree of splendour and magnificence. Indeed, if we may judge either from the avidity with which dramatic spectacles were anticipated by the Athenians—or from the immense expense which attended their celebration—it may fearlessly be pronounced, that in Tragedy, as well as in Painting, Sculpture, and Music, the moderns were far excelled by their predecessors of antiquity.

Two sources are assigned for the origin of the Greek drama. By some it is referred back to the Rhapsodists, or wandering bards, who were accustomed, in very remote ages, to travel from city to city, not only reciting their own compositions, but accompanying the recitation with correspondent gestures. Others, with greater probability, ascribe it to the festivals of Bacchus, at which, particularly in the villages, certain hymns were chanted in honour of the God. In these the authors were accustomed to indulge in the keenest personal

9

invective against the wealthy and the covetous; and their compositions, thus flattering the democratic, and, if we may be allowed the expression, the *levelling* spirit of the Athenian populace, were received with general applause. In process of time, these hymns, which were, at first, only an adventitious appendage, became an integral part of the ceremony; and, for the sake of exciting competition, a goat (*τράγος*) was awarded as a prize to the composer of the best song (*ὠδή*), whence arose the name, as well as the art, of Tragedy.

These hymns, however, did not long continue to be simply lyrical. Their wild and unconnected strains were gradually reduced to some degree of harmony and order; a regular narrative of the exploits of the God was introduced; and even this narrative was soon varied by the occasional substitution of an interlocutory personage. The intent of this new performer was, by diverting the attention of the audience from the immediate subject of

the recitation, to keep awake their interest, and afford, at the same time, some interval of relief to the singer. It was at this era of the dramatic art, that Thespis, a native of a small borough in Attica, named Icaria, (cir. 540 A.C.) gave the first distinguishing feature to Tragedy, by the introduction of an actor whose office it should be to *personate some particular character*; the interlocutor before-mentioned being merely a kind of low jester or buffoon. By this means, the Chorus became subordinate to the actor, instead of the actor to the Chorus. As yet, however, the only stage was a temporary scaffold, erected on the cart of Thespis; and the only disguise of the actor or actors was the lees of wine, with which their faces were besmeared.

During the ensuing half century, little or no improvement appears to have been effected in the composition and exhibition of dramatic spectacles. The names,—and scarcely any thing beyond the names,—of some Tragedians

are recorded, among whom we may particularize Phrynichus. He changed the dithyrambics into a species of verse more suitable to Tragedy, and made a few other alterations ; none, however, of sufficient importance to invalidate the claim of Æschylus to the honourable appellation of ‘ Father of the Drama.’

This great man was born of an illustrious family, in or about the sixty-third Olympiad, 528 B.C. We are not informed of the circumstances that first directed his attention to the dramatic art ; but it is recorded, that, before he attained his thirtieth year, he had both conceived and executed the arduous enterprize of redeeming Tragedy from the degraded state in which he found it, and exalting it to one of the highest pinnacles in the temple of literary fame. He first introduced a second and afterwards a third actor, thus varying the monotony of the former representations by dialogue ; he adorned the stage with suitable scenery, and arrayed the performers in appropriate habits.

In compliance with popular tradition, which assigned to the heroes of the 'olden time' a loftier stature and more commanding aspect, he elevated his actors by the buskin, disguised them in the mask, and invested them with the insignia of royalty. He increased the number and prescribed the office of the Chorus; procured the erection of a spacious and commodious theatre, and reduced the drama nearly to that form in which it has descended to modern times.

But Sophocles, the son of Sophilus, an Athenian, the date of whose birth is fixed at about thirty years posterior to that of Æschylus, was destined one day to rival, if not to eclipse, this great luminary. Endowed by nature with superior personal attractions, which were heightened and improved by the judicious management of his education, he became, in very early life, the object of popular attention and admiration. Among a chorus of chosen youths, who were celebrating

around a trophy the battle of Salamis, he was pre-eminently conspicuous both for the elegance of his person, and the melody of his lyre. His skill in music seems to have presaged the harmony of those beautiful compositions which he was one day to produce ; and his dexterity in the exercises of the Palæstra might well qualify him for that office, which necessarily devolved on all the Grecian dramatists of those ages—to regulate the movements of the person, and direct the modulations of the voice, in their respective actors. He pursued, for a season, the track of lyric poetry ; but the bent of his genius directing him to a nobler species of composition, he boldly entered into competition with Æschylus, then in exclusive possession of the stage, and was declared victor by a plurality of voices in his very first attempt, when he was not more than twenty-five years of age. It is said, though there are substantial reasons for discrediting the account, that Æschylus, fired with indignation



at the preference thus given to his rival, withdrew himself into Sicily.

The improvements introduced by Sophocles into the drama, consisted principally in the superior dexterity with which he formed the plots of his tragedies, and the relation which he made the Chorus bear to the main action of the piece. The plots of Æschylus were extremely rude and inartificial ; often at war with nature, and sometimes scarcely reconcilable with possibility. Sophocles studied nature. If he was not so conversant as his predecessor with the imaginary world ; if he did not invest with such superhuman attributes the heroes whom a superstitious veneration had exalted into Gods ; at least he approached nearer to the true standard of mortality, and raised his characters to that precise elevation, where they would neither be too lofty to excite sympathy, nor so familiar as to incur contempt. He never violates probability to produce effect ;

and if his heroes are less imposing and sublime, they are, at the same time, more interesting and natural than those of Æschylus. The part, also, which he causes the Chorus to sustain in the action imparts a peculiar finish to the piece. In short, whoever would contemplate the Greek drama in the meridian of its perfection must contemplate it in the Tragedies of Sophocles.

For, whatever be the merits of Euripides, (who was born about fourteen years after Sophocles, and commenced his theatrical career at the early age of eighteen,) however high be his reputation for pathos and purity of moral sentiment, he can hardly be said to have contributed, in any degree, towards the perfection of the drama. His method of opening his plays by a species of Prologue, in which one of the principal characters tells the audience what may be very proper for them to know, but is not quite so proper for him or her to communicate, cannot be called an *improvement* ; in fact, generally

speaking, nothing can be more unnatural and extravagant. His plots are sometimes even more barren and improbable than those of *Æschylus* ; his catastrophe occasionally feeble, and not seldom ridiculous. He is, it must be acknowledged, full of solemn and sententious maxims, but even these are frequently introduced in so awkward a manner, that their effect is materially invalidated, if not totally lost; while, by *Sophocles*, though of rarer occurrence, they are invariably displayed to the greatest advantage. *Euripides* interrupts the progress of his action, for the sole purpose of obtruding a prolix and unseasonable moral dissertation. *Sophocles*, with better judgement and more striking effect, deduces the moral from the event. In short, respecting the rival merits of these three great poets, we can hardly venture to differ from *Aristophanes*, who, in compliance with the common sentiment of the people, assigned the first place to *Æschylus*, the second to *Sophocles*, and the last to *Euripides* ; though we

may, perhaps, be pardoned for suggesting a doubt whether Æschylus would have been considered the greatest, had he not been the first.

It has already been intimated by what circumstances the Chorus;—a branch of the Grecian drama, which the English reader will find some difficulty in tolerating;—assumed so conspicuous a part. It is a relic, and, in fact, the sole surviving relic of the original poems. The complement of the Chorus varied at different periods. On one occasion Æschylus introduced no less than fifty upon the stage; but by a subsequent edict, the Chorus was limited to twelve; to which number, at the instance of Sophocles, were afterwards added three more. These fifteen persons were arranged five in depth and three in front; their motions were regulated by a flute-player, and their sentiments were communicated, on all occasions, by their leader, denominated Coryphæus or Choregus. Hence arises that apparent incon-

gruity, which will strike the English reader, that the Chorus are frequently addressed, and return their answer in the singular number. The first instance of this seeming anomaly occurs in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, p. 29, where the Choregus, for himself and his associates, disclaims all participation in the death of Laius—

Mighty King!

So will I speak, as in thy curse involved;

I slew him not—

While the choral odes were singing, the Chorus performed certain evolutions, marching with a kind of military step, and in the order above mentioned, first from right to left, whence the former division of the ode itself is called “Strophe;” and then from left to right, whence the corresponding division is called “Antistrophe.” During the “Epode,” they stood still in the middle of the stage, on which they remained during the whole time of the representation, except when their absence was

indispensably required; as in the *Ajax*, where the hero falls upon his sword, which occurrence could not take place in the presence of any witnesses. On the whole, however the Chorus may be at variance with the notions of the moderns, there can be no doubt that it was rather an ornament than an incumbrance to the ancient stage. It was generally the vehicle of those beautiful moral sentiments in which the Tragic poets delighted, and which justly elevated the dramatic performances of Greece to the dignity of a religious festival.'

It being the principal, or rather the exclusive design of these introductory remarks, to

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<sup>1</sup> The Chorus, Francklin observes, as introduced by Sophocles, is composed of such persons as might naturally be supposed present on the occasion; whose situations might so far interest them in the events of the Fable, as to render their presence useful and necessary; and yet not so deeply concerned as to render them incapable of offering useful reflections and giving advice, an office for which they were particularly appointed.

clear up such difficulties as may present themselves to a reader who is unacquainted with the peculiar customs of the Ancients, we shall not consider it necessary to enter into a minute examination of the Greek Theatres. A full and satisfactory account of these, and all particulars connected with them, may be found either in Francklin's "Dissertation on Ancient Tragedy," or in the Travels of Anacharsis. We shall confine ourselves to a few concise remarks respecting the division and recitation of the plays, with a brief explanation of the "Unities."

The division into five acts; though, as we learn from the canon of Horace,

*Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu,*

it was prevalent among the Latins, appears to have been altogether unknown to the Greeks. The action was uniform and uninterrupted from the commencement to the catastrophe.

This is evident, as well from the constant continuance of the Chorus upon the stage, as from the difficulty of dividing any of the remaining Greek dramas into five acts, which shall bear any reasonable proportion to one another. The more natural division, and that which is sanctioned by the authority of Aristotle, is into Prologue, which extends from the opening of the drama to the first interlude or chorus; Episode, which includes all between the first and last interludes; Exode, which comprises the remainder from the last interlude to the close. Considering, however, the different acceptation in which the word prologue is *now* used, it will perhaps be more intelligible to an English reader, if the whole drama be regarded as one long piece of a single act.

It cannot be decidedly pronounced whether the *ἱαμβοί* (which, in the following translation, are rendered by the usual metre of tragedy, blank heroic verse,) were accompanied with music or not. The former supposition seems



the more probable, since music, according to Aristotle, was one of the essential parts of Tragedy. The recitation may possibly have been a kind of slow and solemn chant;—and wherever it is observed that sudden and abrupt transitions occur in the metre, a question or answer being frequently conveyed in a single word, there it may be supposed that the music was suddenly changed. It is certain that the Greek music possessed, in a peculiar degree, the power of expressing the passions; love, hatred, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, frenzy, jealousy, despair, were alternately depicted by its magic influence ; and that too in such perfection, that the effect of even dramatic illusion would not for an instant be impeded or impaired.

It will appear somewhat singular, that, with very little exception, the entire action of the play is supposed to pass in one and the same place: in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, the *Antigone*, the *Trachiniæ*, and the *Electra*, before the vestibule of a palace; in the *Œdipus Coloneus*, on

the verge of a grove dedicated to the Furies ; in the *Philoctetes*, near a cave on the coast of Lemnos. This arises from the extreme rigour of the rules which the ancient dramatists prescribed to themselves, respecting what are called the Unities. These Unities are threefold,—of Action, of Time, and of Place. We may define the Unity of Action to be, a concentration of the interest into one or two principal characters, with such a continuity of it through the whole drama, that the spectators' thoughts may be exclusively directed to the developement of one catastrophe. Thus the detection of the guilt of *Œdipus* in one tragedy and his death in another; the execution of *Creon's* tyrannical edict on the generous and devoted *Antigone*; the destruction of *Hercules* by the malignant subtilty of the Centaur; the liberation of *Philoctetes* from his captivity in Lemnos; and the triumph of *Electra* and *Orestes* over the murderers of their father;—*these* are the points on which our attention is riveted from the first; and, in the tendency of

every incident to produce the anticipated result, the Unity of Action is exemplified. The only instance in which Sophocles has violated it appears in the *Ajax*, where the action is continued after the death of the hero. This, however, may be accounted for by the peculiarity of the heathen superstition respecting the interment of the dead. The Unity of Time requires that the whole action should be comprised within the space between the rising and the setting of the sun. This rule Sophocles has disregarded in his *Trachiniæ*, where the voyage to Eubœa and back is performed during the representation, even in the short interval while the Chorus is singing an ode. The Unity of Place, as we have already intimated, confines the action to a single place; the exception to which rule occurs also in the *Ajax*, where indeed the nature of the action requires it, as the Chorus separates into two parties, each headed by a leader, in search of Ajax. It is, nevertheless, possible that the scene here may open, and discover Ajax be-

hind.—The observance of these rules, it will readily be seen, must have been an oppressive and almost intolerable restraint on the “free flights” of genius; yet it is a circumstance highly creditable to Sophocles, that while he is more attentive to the Unities than either of his rival dramatists, his plots are more conformable to probability,—his incidents more consistent with the tenor of real life.

The Greeks had a great aversion to the introduction of many characters upon the stage at the same time. The general restriction in this respect,—we are not prepared to say that it may not have been violated in particular instances,—seems to have been, that there should not be more than *three*\* actors, beside the Chorus, actually engaged in the dialogue; and that, if the appearance of a greater number on the

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\* Nec quarta loqui peronsa laboret.—Hor. Ars. Poet.  
192.

stage be absolutely indispensable, they should be merely "Mutæ Personæ," taking no part in the action. Such are Eurysaces in the *Ajax*, and Pylades in the *Electra*. It is evidently one of the principal reasons for this arrangement, that the favourite actor frequently supported, in the representation, more than one character. Thus, in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, the same actor might have performed Creon and the Corinthian, who never appear together; in the *Ajax*, Agamemnon and Menelaus;—by only changing the masks. The necessity for the use of masks will be doubly apparent, when it is remembered that the Greeks never admitted women on the stage; though it must seem wonderful how male performers could successfully imitate that voice—

Ever soft,

Gentle, and low; an excellent thing in woman.—

But it is time that we return to Sophocles.

We have already seen that Sophocles com-

menced his poetical career by a victory over *Æschylus*. He pursued it with distinguished, though not invariable success, and, if one account be credited, expired in the very arms of triumph. Though the number of his compositions, to which the prize was awarded, is not stated to be the same by all authors, it is yet generally admitted, that he was more successful in proportion than either of his competitors. He is said to have produced on the whole one hundred and twenty tragedies, eighteen of which, or, according to others, twenty-four, were honoured with the palm; while but thirteen out of the hundred tragedies of *Æschylus* were equally fortunate, and five only out of the eighty dramas which are attributed to *Euripides*.

It is not, however, as a Poet alone that *Sophocles* is illustrious in the annals of his country; he was scarcely less eminent as a warrior. He was the companion in arms of *Thucydides* and of *Pericles*, with whom he

was associated in reducing to obedience the island of Samos. It is affirmed, that he was afterwards complimented with the government of this new conquest on the representation of his *Antigone*.—Sophocles was the only one of the three great Tragedians, who succeeded in preserving the attachment of a people so characteristically fickle as the Athenians. *Æschylus* and *Euripides* both died in exile, while *Sophocles*, in full enjoyment of the love of his fellow-citizens, and with unabated poetical fervour, survived in the bosom of his country to an extreme old age. The only bitter ingredient which mingled in his overflowing cup of happiness was the ingratitude of his children, who accused him before the magistrates of being incompetent, by reason of the decay of his faculties, to the management of his own affairs. This accusation he triumphantly refuted by reading to the judges his *Œdipus at Colonus*, one of the most interesting of his productions, and full of that calm and gentle beauty which might be expected from his age

and habits. The 'marvellous incidents which are related by Plutarch, Cicero, and others, however unworthy of credit or repetition, are at least sufficient to prove that Sophocles, on account of the excellence of his character, was considered the peculiar favourite of the Gods. And as this great man had been fortunate in his life, so was he happy in his death; he had witnessed the glories of his country in the zenith of her grandeur, but he was spared the bitter pang of beholding her degradation. He expired but a short time before Athens was taken by Lysander, choked, as some relate, by a grapestone, or overpowered, according to others, by excess of joy on having obtained the prize. This latter account we are inclined to question, because his rivals Æschylus and

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' Plutarch mentions that the God Æsculapius dwelt with Sophocles; and Cicero relates, that a goblet having been stolen from the temple of Hercules, the thief was made known to the poet in a vision of the night, which was thrice repeated, till the booty was restored.



Euripides were already deceased, and had left behind them no antagonist over whom Sophocles could be *honoured* by a triumph. So high was the estimation in which this great man was held throughout Greece, that even the rough and perfidious Lysander intermitted for a short period the siege of Athens, that he might afford her citizens an opportunity of celebrating the obsequies of the last and most venerated of their bards.

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The most popular poetical translations of Sophocles are those of Francklin and of Potter. Both are possessed of merit, though in a very different degree. The former translation, which appeared in 1759, is in many parts extremely loose and inaccurate. The pathetic simplicity of the original degenerates, in the translation, into a rude and insipid familiarity; nor does the translator seem to be aware, that a very literal rendering may be a very incorrect one. In the Choral Odes, Dr. Francklin has been

particularly unfortunate. Nevertheless, his work is entitled to considerable praise, as being the first successful attempt to clothe Sophocles “in an English habit,” and thus recommend him to the perusal of those who were unacquainted with the language of the original. The notes, it may be added, convey much valuable information.

The translation of Potter is highly finished and correct, and he may justly be said, in reference to his great original, to have been

“ True to his sense, but truer to his fame.”

It is in those very points, where Dr. Francklin had most conspicuously failed, that Potter most decidedly excels. His Choral Odes are distinguished by a judicious adaptation of metre, and a close adherence to the sense of the original; nor does he ever deviate from the dignified tone of Tragedy. He is simple, without being familiar; faithful, without being

insipid. He may perhaps be occasionally considered deficient in spirit and animation; but if he rarely soars, at least he never sinks. In short, it may be pronounced,—and there can be no higher praise,—that the Translator is not unworthy of the Author.

The reasons which prompted this new translation, and the particulars in which it professes to differ from those which have preceded it, have already been submitted to the Public in a Prospectus; and, judging from the number and respectability of the Subscribers, it is presumed that they have not been unsatisfactory. The main object was there stated to be, “to render the diversified metres of the original by measures as nearly corresponding as the genius of our language will permit.” How far this object has been accomplished, it will remain for the Public to decide.

Of the Notes which are appended to the pre-

sent Translation, it may be necessary to state, that they are designed principally for the information of the English reader. The greater part of them are borrowed from various authors;<sup>4</sup> and wherever a distinct acknowledgement has been accidentally omitted, it is hoped that this general recognition will redeem the Translator from the imputation of attempting to profit by the labours of others, without confessing his obligations. The few which are original have no pretensions to depth of erudition or acuteness of conjecture; they are merely intended as illustrative or explanatory; and their brevity will, it is trusted, be excused, by a consideration of the facility with which they might have been multiplied and enlarged.

This Translation, originally undertaken merely

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<sup>4</sup> The edition which has been taken for the basis of the present Work is that of Erfurdt; though the text and annotations of Brunck, Lobeck, and other Commentators have been diligently considered and compared.

as an exercise for study in earlier days, was commenced and carried forward in the quiet seclusion of a College ; but, after having been abandoned for reasons which it is unnecessary to state, was resumed and completed in the few brief intervals which could be snatched from the avocations of a laborious profession. Could the difficulties have been foreseen, which have since obstructed its progress, it is probable that the work would never have been presented to the Public. But the highly respectable list of Subscribers at once invited and encouraged the best exertions of the Translator to redeem his pledge ; and, for this purpose, he has spared no pains in revising and correcting his first sketch ; and endeavouring to express the sense of the original as closely as the idiom of the English language will allow. The time which has been devoted to the prosecution of his task has passed pleasantly, and, he would gladly persuade himself, not unprofitably ; for it is assuredly matter of more than mere curiosity to observe, what opinions were entertain-

ed by the most enlightened people upon earth on the great subjects of Religion and Morality, centuries before the ‘ day-spring from on high ’ arose with the Gospel. If the polished Athenians are found to have mixed the most absurd puerilities with their civil and religious solemnities, and occasionally to have combined pure and philosophical principles of morals with the most impure and inconsistent system of Polytheism ; this consideration ought not only to excite our gratitude, for the transcendent advantages which we enjoy, but to awaken humility, when we reflect how grossly we have perverted, or how negligently improved them. And he who thus compares the heathen code of morals with the divine institutes of Christianity will, we venture to predict, rise with no inconsiderable benefit from the perusal of the “ *Tragedies of Sophocles.* ”



# ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS.





## ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS.

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WHEN Laius, King of Thebes, upon his marriage with Jocasta, implored the Gods to bless their union with a numerous and happy offspring, it was replied by the oracle, that Jupiter, incensed by the crimes of his ancestors, had assigned to him an only son, by whose hand the Fates had decreed that he should one day perish. The King, appalled by this inauspicious response, formed a solemn resolution never to approach Jocasta. In the reckless hardihood of intoxication, this resolution was disregarded or forgotten, and Jocasta became the mother of a son, predestined, ere his birth, to be the murderer of his father.

Though deterred by the natural yearnings of maternal tenderness from executing in its full extent the mandate of Laius, who had enjoined her to destroy the infant as soon as it was born, the Queen, nevertheless, delivered it to a confidential domestic, with a charge to expose it upon the mountains. The slave, in obedience to this cruel and unnatural command, bored the infant's feet, and suspended it by the heels from a tree in the wild and unfrequented forests of Cithæron. In this condition the child was found by one of the shepherds of Polybus, King of Corinth, who, moved with compassion, unbound the babe, carried it to Corinth, and presented it to the King, his master. Peribœa, the wife of Polybus, prevailed upon her husband, as they were childless, to adopt the infant; who being, accordingly, received into the palace, was educated with the utmost care and tenderness, as the son of Polybus and Peribœa, and the destined inheritor of the crown of Corinth.

It is unnecessary, even for the information of the English reader, to pursue the narrative beyond this point, since all the subsequent events of the life of Œdipus are incidentally developed by him-

self in the progress of the drama. Suffice it, therefore, to premise, that, at the period from which the action commences, Œdipus is supposed to have swayed the sceptre of Thebes for many years, loving his people, and not less beloved by them, happy in an affectionate consort, a flourishing race of children, a loyal and devoted friend. But a dark and lowering cloud has begun to overcast this hitherto calm and unclouded sky: Thebes is visited by a pestilential disorder, universally ascribed to the anger of the Gods; though the cause of their indignation is enveloped in a mysterious and total obscurity. The baleful effects of this penal visitation are most pathetically described in the opening scene. Henceforth, the history of Œdipus proceeds collaterally with the business of the piece.

This tragedy has been honoured with the concurrent approbation of the most acute and judicious critics of every age: it was adopted by Aristotle as a perfect model of dramatic excellence, and few of the modern commentators have been less enthusiastic in their encomiums. It is affirmed to bear the same relation to tragic, which the Iliad

bears to epic poetry. It is said to stand alone and unrivalled, while all other efforts of tragic writers can only be successful in proportion as they approximate more or less to this, their common standard and criterion.

Indeed, when we consider the admirable dexterity which is evinced in the mechanism of the piece, the mutual consistency and harmonious combination of its parts, the gradual and progressive developement of the various circumstances which unite to elicit the catastrophe, it must be acknowledged that this tragedy is absolutely perfect. Not an incident occurs, however trivial in appearance, which does not conduce to some appropriate and important end; not a character is introduced which does not sustain some part of vital and essential interest in the grand business of the drama. The poet never loses sight of the *end* in the prosecution of the *means*. If a momentary hope be excited, it tends but to deepen the impending and inevitable despair; if a ray of light dart rapidly athwart the gloom, it only displays, in all its horror, the approaching "blackness of darkness." The denunciations of Œdipus against the criminal, so worded

from the first as to apply peculiarly to himself; the ambiguous response brought by Creon from the oracle of Delphi; the reluctant compliance of Tiresias with the first summons of the monarch, as though he were constrained by some mighty and mysterious agency, which he vainly struggled to control; his subsequent vehemence of prophetic indignation; the profane and arrogant exultation which bursts from Jocasta on the apparent confutation of the oracle by the death of Polybus; the faint solitary hope, to which the shuddering monarch clings in that pause of agonizing suspense, while he is awaiting the arrival of the Theban slave; the resistless and overwhelming conviction which flashes upon his soul at the clear unequivocal testimony of this last fatal witness; all these circumstances are successively described in a manner so lively and natural, that the interest never languishes for an instant. We are prepossessed from the first in favour of the unhappy prince; we feel with him and for him; we are continually agitated between hope and fear; and, though we know from the beginning that the catastrophe is inevitable, we are scarcely less startled and surprised by

the appalling discovery, than if it had been totally unexpected and unforeseen.

Another point in which the poet has displayed his consummate acquaintance with the nicest refinement of his art, is the delineation of the character of Œdipus. Had this devoted monarch been represented altogether without blemish, we might have pitied his sorrows, but we could not have sympathised with them: had he been portrayed as an utterly abandoned criminal, we could neither have sympathised with him nor pitied him. We feel, comparatively, but little interest in characters which rise far above, or sink greatly below, the common level of mankind; the former excite our indifference,—the latter, our disgust. But Œdipus, unlike the heroes of modern tragedy, neither sins like a demon, nor suffers like a God.<sup>1</sup> He is in all things a perfectly *human* character, a being of like passions with ourselves, not free from faults, yet “more sinned against

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, xxv.

than sinning,"—not wholly undeserving of censure, yet far more unfortunate than culpable. Such is man. *Mentem mortalia tangunt.*

We cannot, however, forbear to record our dissent from one eulogy of Sophocles, which, notwithstanding, has been pronounced by no mean authority. "Never," it has been said, "was there a tale more affecting than that of Œdipus, and never was it told more pathetically than by Sophocles."<sup>2</sup> In the former part of this panegyric we cannot acquiesce; on the contrary, we consider the tale, on which the drama is founded, as altogether repugnant and revolting to the best and finest feelings of our nature; and in no one instance is the genius of Sophocles so transcendently triumphant, as in the consummate address with which he has treated a subject calculated, in less powerful hands, to awaken only the strongest emotions of horror, indignation, and disgust. But the master-spirit of the great poet has tempered the revolting details of his plot with so much pure human feeling, such

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<sup>2</sup> Knox's Essays, No. clxxvi.



pathetic and redeeming benevolence, that our sympathy is never for an instant checked by abhorrence, or superseded by disgust. We forget the crimes of Œdipus in his misfortunes ; nor do we so much regard the murderer, the parricide, the *τῷ πατρὶς ὁμόσπορος*, as the dethroned monarch, — the blind, self-devoted, and despairing outcast,—the affectionate and miserable father, who, though his children survive, is yet worse than childless, for they only survive to misery, and of that misery *he* is the cause !

But it would be unpardonable in a Christian writer, while commenting upon this drama, to pass lightly over that which Sophocles himself claimed as the brightest ornament of his native Athens,<sup>3</sup> and which constitutes not the least interesting feature in his own immortal dramas,—a pious and devout reverence for the Gods. The chorus in this tragedy nobly sustain their dignified character. Venerable alike for age and virtue, they will not suffer to pass unnoticed or unreprieved the unguarded exclamations

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<sup>3</sup> Œdip. Colon. 1005.

even of the monarch whom they revere and love. The choral hymns breathe a beautiful spirit of meek and holy feeling, coupled with the most poetic elevation of sentiment, and interspersed with pathetic appeals to Heaven to avert its vengeance from their country and their King. And we trust it will not be deemed intrusive or irrelevant, if we seize the opportunity of drawing, not from this drama alone, but from the collective works of Sophocles, the following moral conclusion: that if, under the disadvantages of a confused and complicated mythology, and at a period when, with respect to religious truth, “darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people,”—if a heathen poet could then inculcate the fear of the Gods as the most exalted virtue and the most imperative duty, how ought WE to evince, by our more rigid and enlightened observance of the same precept, that “the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth,”—that, as our knowledge is more extensive than was that of the heathen, so is our piety more fervent, our morality more pure, our practice more virtuous and irreproachable.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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**ŒDIPUS, KING OF THEBES.**

**PRIEST OF JUPITER.**

**CREON, BROTHER OF JOCASTA.**

**TIRESIAS.**

**JOCASTA, WIFE OF ŒDIPUS.**

**CORINTHIAN.**

**HERDSMAN.**

**MESSENGER.**

**CHORUS OF AGED THEBANS.**

# ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS. .

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SCENE—THEBES, *before the Palace of ŒDIPUS.*

ŒDIPUS. THEBANS.

*Œd.* Why, O my children, from the ancient stock  
Of Cadmus sprung, why haste ye to these seats  
Bearing the suppliant branches ?<sup>1</sup> Incense breathes  
Through all the town, and votive pæans blend  
With deep and bitter wailings. O my people,  
I could not learn your woes from other lips,

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<sup>1</sup> Suppliants, whether they addressed themselves to Gods or men, were accustomed to bear in their hands olive-branches tipped with wool, called, by the Greeks, *σίμματα*, by the Latins, *velamina*.

But came in person, Œdipus, your King !  
 A name to all illustrious. Say, old man—  
 Thine age demands such reverence—wherefore thus  
 Ye bend imploring? Dread ye future ills,  
 Or strive with present griefs? My will is prompt  
 To aid in all :—obdurate were my heart  
 Could I behold a sight like this unmoved.

*Pr.* O Œdipus, imperial lord of Thebes !  
 Thou seest our sad estate, and how we sit  
 Before thine altars ;<sup>2</sup> some, whose callow wings  
 Refuse a lengthened flight ;—some, bowed with age,  
 Priests of the Gods—myself the Priest of Jove,  
 And some, the flower of all our Theban youth.  
 Another band their suppliant boughs extend  
 At the two fanes of Pallas,<sup>3</sup> and the shrine  
 Oraclar, by fair Ismenus' stream. . . . .  
 The state—as thou may'st witness—with the storm

<sup>2</sup> The altars here intended were not consecrated to Œdipus, but simply erected before the doors of his palace, and, most probably, dedicated to Apollo.

<sup>3</sup> In Thebes, there were two temples of Minerva erected to her under the names of Oncaea and Ismenia. Apollo had a temple on the banks of the Ismenus, and from the flames and ashes of its altars his priests drew prophecies; hence *ἱσμήνῃσιν σποδῶν*, the prophetic ashes of Ismenus.

Is struggling, and in vain essays to rear  
 Her head emergent from the blood-stained wave.  
 Her fruits are blasted in the opening bud ;  
 Her herds, infected, perish ; her weak births  
 Are blighted immature. The fiery God,<sup>4</sup>  
 Loathed Pestilence, o'er this devoted city  
 Hangs imminent, and desolates th' abode  
 Of Cadmus, while in shrieks and piercing groans  
 Dark Pluto richly revels. Hence I bend,  
 With these sad youths, a suppliant at thine altars ;  
 Not that we deem thee equal to the Gods,  
 But in the sad vicissitudes of life,  
 Or visitations of the angry Gods,  
 Account thee first of men. At Thebes arriving,  
 Thou didst redeem us from the tax imposed  
 By that relentless monster,<sup>5</sup> uninformed,  
 Untaught of us ; by pitying Heaven alone  
 We deem thee sent our glory to restore.

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<sup>4</sup> The "fiery God," according to Musgrave, is Mars. The ground of his conjecture is the application of the epithet *εὐρύς* to the planet bearing the name of that divinity. It appears more probable, however, that the expression poetically denotes a personification of Pestilence.

<sup>5</sup> Ἀοιδῶν, literally, songstress ; so called, because her enigmas were propounded in verse.

Now, worthiest Œdipus ! on thee we fix  
 Our supplicating eyes,—O find us aid,  
 Or from the sure responses of the Gods,  
 Or man's experienced wisdom. Oft we see  
 That prudent counsels, e'en in deadliest ills,  
 Impart returning life. Noblest of men  
 Arise, once more the drooping state revive,  
 Arise, and wisdom guide thee ! Though our realm  
 Hails thee her great Deliverer for the deeds  
 Of other days, no more can we recall  
 Thy happier sway—if, once by thee preserved,  
 Again we sink in ruin. Then restore  
 Our rescued state to safety ; and as erst  
 With happiest omens thou didst rise and save,  
 So be again thyself. Still o'er this land  
 Wouldst thou bear sway,—'tis better far to rule  
 O'er peopled cities, than deserted realms.  
 'Nought can strong tower or stately ship avail,  
 If nobler man, the soul of each, be wanting.

° The same thought has been beautifully imitated, we might  
 almost say translated, by Sir William Jones.

What constitutes a state ?  
 Not high-raised battlements, or laboured mound,  
 Thick wall, or moated gate :  
 Not cities proud, with spires and turrets crowned,

*Œd.* O my afflicted people, but too well  
 I know the purport of your prayers ; I know  
 Your common sufferings ; yet, 'mid all your woes,  
 None mourns so deeply as your pitying monarch :  
 Each o'er his own peculiar misery weeps,  
 Nor thinks of others' pain ;—*my* heart is wrung  
 At once for you, the city, and myself.  
 Nor do ye rouse me now from reckless sleep ;  
 Know, many tears your King hath shed for you,  
 And traversed many a path in thought's wild maze.  
 One remedy alone my search discerned ;  
 This I at once applied. The noble Creon,  
 Menœceus' son, my kinsman,<sup>7</sup> have I sent  
 To Phœbus' Pythian shrine, charged to demand  
 How I may save the state by word or deed.  
 Now, as I reckon the revolving days,  
 The strange delay alarms me ; for his stay  
 Hath passed the allotted term. When he arrives,

Not bays, and broad-armed ports  
 Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride :  
 No ;—men, high-minded men.

<sup>7</sup> Γαμβρός. The Greeks restrict this term, in its proper and peculiar sense, to those who are connected by ties of affinity, but not by blood, though it is occasionally taken, in a general sense, to express both.



If I perform not all the God ordains,  
Account your monarch basest of mankind.

*Pr.* Well hast thou said, O King! These youths  
proclaim  
The wished approach of Creon.

*Œd.* Royal Phœbus,  
Grant he return with tidings not less glad,  
Than the fair promise of his brightening eye.

*Pr.* He seems indeed exultant, or his brow  
With the rich laurel were not thus enwreathed.<sup>s</sup>

*Œd.* Soon shall we learn; our voice can reach  
him now.

*Enter CREON.*

ŒDIPUS, CREON, PRIEST, THEBANS.

*Œd.* Prince, our loved kinsman, great Menœceus'  
son,  
What answer bring'st thou from the God to Thebes?

*Cr.* Auspicious tidings; e'en our present ills,  
If guided well, may yield a prosperous issue.

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<sup>s</sup> Those who returned from the oracle of Delphi, with an auspicious answer, were crowned with wreaths of laurel.

*Œd.* What mean thy words? Nor livelier hope  
I draw,

Nor added terrors, from a speech like this.

*Cr.* If 'mid this concourse thou wouldst hear, I  
stand

Prepared to speak ; if not, to pass within.

*Œd.* Nay, speak to all. I count not life itself  
Of equal interest with my people's sorrow.

*Cr.* Let me then tell the bidding of the God.  
Phœbus hath straitly charged us to expel  
Our state's pollution, nurtured in its bosom ;  
Nor harbour guilt that cannot be forgiven.

*Œd.* What, then, is this mysterious guilt, and what  
The due atonement ?

*Cr.* Exile from the land,  
Or death requiting death, since guiltless blood  
Troubles the state.

*Œd.* To whose disastrous fate  
Points this response ?

*Cr.* O King, ere yet thy hand  
Assumed the helm of empire in our state,  
Laius was lord in Thebes.

*Œd.* Thus fame hath told me :—  
I ne'er beheld the monarch.

*Cr.* He was slain ;

And with no dubious voice the God enjoins  
On the fell murderers to avenge his death.

*Œd.* Where do they lurk? and where shall we  
explore

The path, so hard to trace, of guilt like this?

*Cr.* E'en in this land, he said, pursuit may soon  
Detect the deed, by slow neglect concealed.

*Œd.* Died Laius in the palace, or the field,  
Or by assassins in a foreign land?

*Cr.* To seek a distant oracle, 'tis said,  
He left the home to which he ne'er returned.

*Œd.* Did then no herald, no attendant view  
His fall, of whom we may demand the truth?

*Cr.* All died, save one, who fled in wild dismay,  
And of the scene he witnessed could recount  
One circumstance alone.

*Œd.* Repeat that one.  
If the first light of hope be well improved,  
A full disclosure may requite our toil.

*Cr.* He said that ruffians met the King, who fell  
Oppressed by numbers, not by single hand.

*Œd.* How could a robber, if unbribed by traitors  
Within the city, dare this desperate deed?

*Cr.* Such was suspicion's comment; but there rose  
No bold avenger, 'mid our ills, to Laius!

*Æd.* But, when your monarch was thus basely  
slain,

What cause withheld you from a strict inquiry?

*Cr.* The Sphynx, propounding charms in mystic  
verse,

Turned all our thoughts from dubious ills away  
To instant evils.

*Æd.* From their very source  
Soon will I drag to light these deeds of darkness :  
Such inquisition for a murdered King  
Is worthy both of Phœbus and of you ;  
I too, confederate in this righteous cause,  
Will vindicate at once the state and heaven.  
Swayed by no distant interests, do I rise  
To crush this foul pollution,—’tis *my* cause ;  
Who shed the blood of Laius would embrue,  
With equal daring, his bold hand in mine ;  
Your King avenging, thus I guard myself.  
But from your seats, my children, rise with speed ;  
Bear hence your suppliant boughs. And let a herald  
Convoke the Theban people to our presence ;  
Nought will I leave untraced ;—Phœbus my guide,  
To gladness will we soar, or sink to ruin.

*Pr.* Arise, my sons ; the end for which we came  
Is now accomplished, for the King hath said it.

And may the God, who sent this dark response,  
Shine forth our saviour, and this plague arrest.

[*Erit* ŒDIPUS, &c.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

Sweet-breathing voice of Jove, what fateful word  
Bring'st thou to Thebes from Delphi's golden shrine?  
Troubled in soul, I quake with awe divine!

O Pæan, Power of healing, most adored  
In Delos' hallowed isle, THOU wak'st my fear!  
What dread decree, remote or near,  
Shall thy prophetic voice proclaim?  
Say, child of golden Hope, imperishable Fame!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Daughter of Jove, immortal Pallas! hear  
The suppliant vows that first to thee are paid;  
Thy sister Dian next, earth-ruling maid,

Who 'mid the forum her proud throne doth rear;  
And the far-darting Phœbus! Mighty Three!  
Appear—avert our misery!  
If from our Thebes her former woe  
Your guardian-care dispelled, O come to aid us now!

**STROPHE II.**

Alas ! unnumbered ills we bear ;

Dismay and anguish reign  
Through all our state ; and wisdom's care  
Strives, 'mid dejection and despair,

To bring relief in vain.

Nor ripen now the fruits of earth,  
Nor mothers, in th'untimely birth,

The struggling throes sustain.

Swift as the wild bird's rapid flight,  
Or flames that flash through circling night,  
Unnumbered spectres sink, a joyless train,  
To the dark shores of Pluto's dreary reign.

**ANTISTROPHE II.**

Thus doth th' unpeopled city sigh,,

Wide o'er whose pavements spread  
The lifeless heaps unheeded lie,

Ungraced with pious obsequy,

Or tear in pity shed,

Matrons and wives, a mournful band,  
Suppliant around the altars stand ;

With groans of piercing dread,  
Their votive strains to Heaven ascend,  
And sighs with louder pæans blend.

Bright daughter of the Mightiest ! fair-eyed Maid,  
Rise in thy might, and send thy people aid !

## STROPHE III.

This ruthless power, who, raging round,

Clad in no panoply of war,<sup>9</sup>

Inflicts a deeper, deadlier wound—

O drive him from our land afar

In backward flight, or where the wave

Hides Amphitrite's trackless cave ;

Or where the restless whirlwinds roar

On Thracia's bleak and barbarous shore.

If aught survives the baleful night

'Tis blasted by the morning-light.

Oh Thou, who roll'st red lightnings in thine ire,

Smite with thy vengeful bolt the foe, Eternal Sire !

## ANTISTROPHE III.

And from thy bright and golden bow

Speed the keen shafts, Lycæan King !

<sup>9</sup> *Αριά τὸν μαλερόν*, Martem ustivum, the same with ὁ πυρφόρος Θεὸς, above-mentioned. *Ἀχαλκος ἀσπίδων*, not equipped in panoply; the ravages of pestilence being more desolating than the violence of war.

The shafts that ever strike the foe,  
 These in thy people's succour wing;  
 Thou, Dian, lift thy beams of light  
 On us, as on Lycæum's height;  
 Thee too, with golden mitre crowned,  
 Whose name exalts thy Thebes renowned;  
 Thee, Bacchus, flushed with wine's deep hue,  
 Whose path th'infuriate Nymphs pursue;  
 On thee I call; be thy red torches driven  
 To crush this fatal Pest, this Power abhorred in heaven.

*Re-enter* ŒDIPUS.

ŒDIPUS. CHORUS.

*Œd.* I hear thy prayers, nor are they breathed  
 in vain—

If thou wilt heed my counsels, and observe  
 Whate'er the crisis claims, thou mayst achieve  
 A remedy or respite from thy ills.

I, as a stranger to the tale, will speak;  
 A stranger to the deed. I cannot hope  
 To search it far with not a track to guide me;  
 Yet, last enrolled among the sons of Thebes,  
 This is my charge to all her citizens:



Whoe'er is conscious of the murderous hand  
That shed the blood of Laius, I ordain  
He do forthwith reveal to me the whole :  
And lest, by fear withheld, he shrink to own  
His latent guilt, no heavier doom awaits him,  
Than to retire uninjured into exile ;  
Or if one know th' assassin, and he draw  
His breath from foreign soil, still let him speak,—  
With gifts and added thanks will we requite him.  
If yet ye all are silent, and there be  
One, for his own life or his friend's appalled,  
Who still shall slight our mandate, hear ye next  
The solemn edict we will then proclaim.  
This man, whoever he be, let none that owns  
Our sceptre and our sway presume to grant  
The shelter of a home ; let none accost him ;  
Let none associate with him in the vows  
And victims of the Gods, or sprinkle o'er him  
The lustral stream ;<sup>10</sup> let all, from every roof,

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<sup>10</sup> *χέριβς*. This word does not, as Potter has translated it, imply the laver itself; but denotes, according to Athenæus, water in which was dipped a firebrand taken from the altar where the sacrifice had been offered; sprinkling with this all who were present at the sacrifice, they performed the lustration.

Chase far the dire pollution, as the word  
Of Phœbus by his oracle enjoined.  
Thus will I be confederate with the God,  
And with the murdered monarch. On the wretch  
Who wrought this impious deed, or if alone,  
Or leagued with more, he shroud his head in darkness,  
I imprecate my curse ; may he consume  
His joyless years in misery and despair,  
Torn from the common blessings of mankind.  
Yea, on myself,<sup>1</sup> if, conscious of the deed,  
I grant the wretch asylum in my home,  
The same dread curse, in all its vengeance, fall !  
Ye too I charge, our solemn word obey,  
Both for your King, the God, and this poor land,  
Now parched and withering in the wrath of Heaven.  
Nay, had the Gods their warning voice withheld,  
It ill became you unatoned to leave  
A crime like this,—a warrior, and a King,  
Cut off by traitorous guilt. 'Twas then your part

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<sup>1</sup> Brunck proposes to read this passage, γίνετο μὴ ὃ ξυνιδέας,  
“ I imprecate the same curse upon him, even if resident in  
my own family ;” but the common reading, ἐμοῦ ξυνιδέας,  
which we have adopted in the text, seems preferable.

To press a strict inquiry,<sup>2</sup> now 'tis mine.  
Mine is the realm which once his sceptre swayed ;  
Mine is his nuptial couch, and mine his wife ;  
Mine too had been his children, but that Heaven  
Willed not to bless him with a prosperous seed ;  
And fate in ruin burst upon his head.—  
Therefore, in his behalf, as in a father's,<sup>3</sup>  
Will I arise, and every path explore,  
To seize the dark assassin of the son  
Of Labdacus, the heir of Polydore,  
Cadmus, and old Agenor. And I pray,

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<sup>2</sup> It has been objected by the severity of criticism, that so long a period could scarcely have elapsed since the death of Laius, without some inquiry into the circumstances which had occasioned it. We might reply, in defence of the poet, With whom could such an inquiry be expected to originate ? Jocasta, without any violation of probability, may be rather supposed anxious to suppress than to revive the memory of her former husband ; and if even Œdipus had been apprized of the circumstances, why should he feel so intense an interest in the fate of a stranger, as to institute an inquiry into a crime, which does not even appear to have been perpetrated within the jurisdiction of Thebes ?

<sup>3</sup> We cannot but notice here the consummate address of the poet, in causing Œdipus to assume the character and relation which rightfully belong to him, but of which he is so fatally unconscious.

That Earth, though tilled in sorrow, may deny  
Her kindly fruits to all who slight our charge ;  
Their marriage-bed be childless ; may they sink  
In anguish keen as that we now deplore,  
Yea, meet a deadlier doom. To you, my friends,  
And all the Thebans who approve our will,  
May justice lend her aid, and the good Gods  
Accord their favouring presence.

*Ch.* Mighty King!

So will I speak, as in thy curse involved ;  
I slew him not, nor yet can I disclose  
The murderer. Phœbus, who this search ordained,  
Alone can guide it to unveil the guilty.

*Œd.* True are thy words ; but who can force the  
Gods

To swerve from their high pleasure ?

*Ch.* What my breast

Inspires, would I a second time propose.

*Œd.* Though it be thrice, forbear not thou to speak.

*Ch.* The seer Tiresias, in prophetic skill,  
Is scarce, I know, by Phœbus self excelled ;  
Ask thou of him, O King, he will resolve thee.

*Œd.* Nor on this hope have I been slow to act.  
Counselled by Creon, twice have we required  
His presence, and much marvel why he comes not.

*Ch.* Vague and most dubious are the ancient rumours.

*Œd.* What are they? I would weigh e'en rumour well.

*Ch.* 'Tis said some travellers slew him!

*Œd.* This I heard;  
But none can say who saw it.

*Ch.* If he be  
Alive to fear, he will not calmly bear  
Thy stern and solemn curse.

*Œd.* Who trembled not  
To do such deed, will never quake at words.

*Ch.* One now draws nigh, whose voice shall soon  
convict him.  
They lead the reverend prophet, in whose breast  
Alone of mortals shines inherent truth.

*Enter, TIRESIAS.*

ŒDIPUS, TIRESIAS, CHORUS.

*Œd.* Tiresias, whose expansive mind surveys  
All man can learn, or solemn silence seal,  
The signs of heaven, and secrets of the earth;

Though sight is quenched in darkness, well thou  
know'st

The fatal plague that desolates our Thebes;  
From which, O Prince, we hope to find in thee  
Our help and sole preserver. List, if yet  
Thou hast not heard his mandate,—the response  
Returned by Phœbus. Never shall this pest  
Cease its wide desolation, till we seize,  
And on th' assassins of the murdered King  
Avenge his fall by exile or by death.  
O then refuse not thou, if thou hast aught  
Of augury or divination sure,  
To save thyself, thy country, and thy King,  
And ward this foul pollution of the dead.  
We trust in thee. Of all our earthly toils  
The best and noblest is to aid mankind.

*Ti.* Ah! woe is me! for wisdom is but woe,  
When to be wise avails not. This I knew,  
But ill remembered, or I ne'er had come.

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\* We have, in this scene, a fine and impressive comment on the evil consequences of prying into futurity. Tiresias would gladly exchange this baleful knowledge for the bliss of ignorance.

*Œd.* What may this mean ! and whence this  
strange dismay ?

*Ti.* Dismiss me to my home : this grace conferred,  
Thou wilt endure thy griefs, I mine, more lightly.

*Œd.* It were unjust, ungrateful to the state,  
Which hath sustained thee, to withhold thy counsel.

*Ti.* Thy words are most untimely to thyself.  
Let me beware, lest I too swerve from caution.

*Ch.* Oh, by the Gods, refuse not what thou canst.  
In one assenting prayer we all implore thee.

*Ti.* For ye are all unwise. Be well assured,  
I will not speak, and publish thy despair.

*Œd.* Dost thou then know and wilt not speak  
the truth ?

Wilt thou betray us, and subvert thy country ?

*Ti.* I would not injure thee, nor wound myself.  
Why urge me thus ? Nought shalt thou hear from me.

*Œd.* Basest of villains ! for thou wouldst excite  
The insensate rock to wrath, wilt thou not speak ?  
Still dost thou seem unpitying and unmoved ?

*Ti.* Thou hast reproved my warmth, yet little  
know'st

What dwells in thine own bosom, though on me  
Thou heap'st reproach.

*Œd.* And who could calmly hear  
Such words, so shameful to thine injured country?

*Ti.* Soon will these things appear, though I be  
silent.

*Œd.* Doth it not then behove thee to declare  
What soon shall come to light?

*Ti.* I'll speak no more.  
Indulge this lawless passion at thy will.

*Œd.* Nought will I now suppress, since anger  
prompts  
My unreservèd speech. I do suspect thee  
Accomplice of the deed, save that thy hand  
Struck not the mortal blow; had sight been thine,  
I then had charged thee as the only villain!

*Ti.* Ha! Is it thus? Nay, then, I tell thee, King!  
Adhere to thine own edict; from this hour  
No more hold converse or with these or me.  
THOU art the sole polluter of our land.

*Œd.* Art thou so lost to shame, as to indulge  
A taunt like this. Think'st thou to 'scape unscathed?

*Ti.* I have escaped: the might of truth is mine.

*Œd.* By whom informed?—not through thy pre-  
scent art.

*Ti.* By thee; thy will constrained me thus to speak,  
Though most reluctant.



*Œd.* What? Repeat thy words,  
That I may learn more clearly.

*Ti.* Knew'st thou not  
Before, or wouldst thou tempt me to speak on?

*Œd.* I have not caught thy purport. Speak again.

*Ti.* I say thou art the murderer whom thou seekest.

*Œd.* Thou shalt not vent that slander twice unpunished.

*Ti.* Shall I proceed, and fire thy rage to frenzy?

*Œd.* Speak what thou wilt, it will be said in vain.

*Ti.* Thou dost not know what guilty ties unite thee  
To those thou deem'st most dear ; thou dost not see  
The ills that close thee round.

*Œd.* And dost thou hope  
Again to triumph in thy vaunt unharmed ?

*Ti.* If there be aught of potency in truth.

*Œd.* There is, but not for thee. Thou hast it not ;  
Dark in thine eye, in heart and ear yet darker.

*Ti.* Wretched art thou in thus upbraiding me,  
Whom all, ere long, shall urge with like reproach.

*Œd.* Nurtured in night alone, thou canst not harm  
The man who views the living light of heaven.

*Ti.* 'Tis not thy doom to fall by me ; for this  
Phœbus is mighty, who will work the whole.

*Œd.* Didst thou, or Creon, frame these sage inventions?

*Ti.* Not Creon wrongs thee, thou dost wrong thyself.

*Œd.* O wealth, O empire, and thou nobler art,<sup>5</sup>  
Potent o'er all to brighten life with joy,  
What baleful envy on your splendour waits!  
Since for these regal honours, which the state  
Confided to my hand, a boon unsought,  
Creon, my first and once most faithful friend,  
By traitorous cunning saps my rightful sway,  
And hath suborned this dark designing wizard,  
This scheming specious sorcerer, skilled alone  
To seek his profit, sightless in his art.  
When didst thou ever prove a faithful prophet?  
Why, when the Monster<sup>6</sup> screamed her mystic charm,

<sup>5</sup> Τίχην τέχνης. Literally, the art of arts, *ars ceteris artibus præstans*. What are we to understand by this? The word is conjectured in this passage to denote generally *wisdom*, and, in particular, that wisdom, or subtlety, which Œdipus had evinced in resolving the enigma of the Sphinx.

<sup>6</sup> ΠΑΥΩΔΟΣ ΚΥΩΝ. The Greeks applied the term ΚΥΩΝ to several of their mythological monsters, particularly the Furies, who are called by Orestes, in the Chæphori of Æschylus, μητρός ἔγκοτοι κύβες; so our own Shakspeare,

“Cry havoc! and let slip the dogs of war!”

Didst thou not break it to redeem thy country ?  
To solve th' enigma was no chance emprise,  
Well might such task demand the prophet's aid !  
Yet nought from divination couldst thou learn ;  
Nought did the Gods inform thee : then I came,  
This inexperienced Œdipus, and, led  
By reason, not by auguries, quelled the foe ;—  
Whom now thou seek'st to banish, deeming thus  
To stand in state usurped near Creon's throne ;  
But thou, with him who shared thy base designs,  
Shalt feel our righteous vengeance. Save that age  
Some reverence claims, now would I teach thee  
wisdom.

*Ch.* If we conjecture right, the prophet spake  
In vehement wrath ; thus too, O King, thou spakest.  
Such ill beseems our state : 'twere best to seek  
How we may trace the pleasure of the God.

*Ti.* Though thou art monarch, yet with like  
reproach

Thy slanders will I quit, for this I can ;  
To thee I am no vassal, but to Phœbus ;  
Nor will I look to Creon as my patron.  
Know, since my blindness wakes thy keen reproach,  
Clear-sighted as thou art, thou dost not see  
What ills enclose thee—where thou hast thy home—

With whom that home is shared. Art thou apprized  
 Who gave thee birth? Thou art th' unconscious foe  
 Of thine own race on earth, and in the tomb.  
 Soon shall thy father's, soon thy mother's curse,  
 With fearful stride expel thee from the land;  
 Now blest with sight,—then, plunged in endless  
 gloom.

Ere long what shore shall not attest thy cries?  
 How will they echo from Cithæron's<sup>7</sup> brow,  
 When thou shalt learn that marriage, where impelled,  
 As with propitious gales, in evil port  
 Thy heedless bark hath anchored. Seest thou not  
 A gathering storm of miseries, doomed ere long  
 To burst alike on thee and on thy children?  
 Vent now on Creon and my prescient word  
 Thy keen upbraidings. None of mortal race

<sup>7</sup> This, observes Brumoy, is an allusion to the past, which could not be preserved in the translation. Why not? The ignorance of Œdipus does not affect the validity of the prophet's denunciation. The obscurity of Tiresias has been objected to; but obscurity is the necessary and appropriate language of prophecy; its clearest and most satisfactory explanation is the event.

Λιμὴν, properly, portus, a haven, a strand, should here be used in the sense of ἀγορά, as Mount Cithæron was situated inland, between Phocis and Bœotia.

Hath ever fallen so low as thou shalt fall.

*Œd.* Must I then brook such shameless taunts  
from thee?

A curse light on thee, babbler! to thy home  
Away, and rid us of thy hateful presence.

*Ti.* But for thy summons, I had never come.

*Œd.* I little deemed that thou wouldst prate so  
weakly,

Or never had I sought thy presence here.

*Ti.* Though to thy better wisdom void of sense  
We seem, thy parents once esteemed us wise.

*Œd.* Who are they? Stop, and tell who gave  
me birth.

*Ti.* This day will show thy birth, and seal thy ruin.

*Œd.* How wild, and how mysterious are thy words!

*Ti.* Art thou not skilled t' unriddle *this* enigma?

*Œd.* Reproach the path that led me up to greatness.

*Ti.* That very path hath led thee to perdition.

*Œd.* I reckon not that, so I preserved the state.

*Ti.* Then I depart. Thou, boy, conduct me hence.

*Œd.* Aye, let him lead thee. Thou dost mar  
our counsels;

When absent, thou wilt trouble us no more.

*Ti.* I go; but first will do mine errand here,  
By thy stern looks unawed. Thou canst not harm me.

I tell thee, King, the man whom thou hast sought  
 With fearful menaces, denouncing death  
 On Laius' murderer, THAT MAN IS HERE.  
 In word he seems an alien, yet shall prove  
 By birth a Theban, nor in this disclosure  
 Shall long exult. From sight reduced to blindness,  
 To penury from wealth, he shall go forth  
 To foreign climes by a frail staff directed  
 Then to his children shall be proved at once  
 A brother and a father; and to her  
 Who gave him birth a husband and a son,  
 Corrival<sup>3</sup> of the father whom he slew.  
 Seek now thy palace, and reflect on this;  
 And, if thou find my bodings unfulfilled,  
 Deem me untutored in prophetic lore.

[*Exeunt* TIRESIAS and ŒDIPUS.]

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<sup>3</sup> 'Ὀμότροπος, if taken in a passive sense, signifies "born of the same mother," and is synonymous with ὁμαίμος; if used actively, it denotes a man who has children by the same woman who had children by another person referred to. The present translator, in common with his predecessors, feels and acknowledges his inability to convey the idea adequately in English. The word corrival, used by Shakspeare, can hardly be said to afford even a distant resemblance to the original.

*Chorus.*

## STROPHE I.

Whom did the fate-unfolding word  
From Delphi's rock-hewn shrine proclaim,  
The wretch who wrought with ruthless sword  
The deed we dare not name?  
Now let him seek, in frantic speed,  
To emulate the foaming steed;  
The Son of Jove, arrayed in arms of light,  
With vengeful flames is gaining on his flight,  
And still the Fates, resistless in their wrath,  
Track the base murderer's path.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Bright the prophetic word hath shone  
From hoar Parnassus' snow-crowned brow,  
To trace the guilty wretch, unknown,  
And hid in darkness now.  
Aye, let him range the lonely wood,  
Lurk, like the bull, in cavern rude,  
Or with tired steps a weary wanderer roam—  
Ne'er can he shun the presage of his doom

From Delphi's shrine<sup>9</sup> denounced,—where'er he fly,  
The Living Curse is nigh.

STROPHE II.

Dire were the bodings of the seer ;  
And doubt and dread distract my breast,  
Nor all he told, nor all suppressed.  
I yield in turn to hope and fear,  
And trace the present and the past,  
Each with impervious gloom o'ercast.  
No mortal feud arose  
Between our monarch and the royal line  
Of Thebes ; nor now, nor then can I divine  
The Kings were ever foes.  
<sup>10</sup>How should I then adopt the Seer's decree

<sup>9</sup> Delphi's shrine. In the original τὰ μισόμφαλα γᾶς, literally, umbilicum terræ, the centre of the earth, in which the ancients supposed Delphi to be situated ; so line 889, γᾶς ἱε' ὀμφαλόν, " the central shrine."

<sup>10</sup> Musgrave proposes to read in this passage ἰπικυροῖ for ἰπικυρος, thereby referring the word to Œdipus. But there does not appear any ground for rejecting the version of Brunck, who has, " unde conjecturam faciens explorem, an propter vatis evulgatum responsum, contra Œdipodem Labdacidis auxilium laturus sim, ultionemque cædis obscuræ suscepturus."



To aid the house of Laius, and on thee,  
O Œdipus, avenge this deed of mystery?

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Though Jove and Phœbus still are wise,  
And still to them mankind are known,  
Yet that the prophet views alone  
Things unrevealed to mortal eyes—  
I cannot judge: in wisdom's lore  
Beyond his fellow man may soar;  
But ne'er, till in my sight  
His truth be proved, on those who slight his word  
By me can censure or reproach be poured.  
When, with destroying flight,  
To Œdipus the fell Enchantress came,  
His sage response redeemed my country's shame,  
Then let my grateful heart such hideous charge  
disclaim.

*Enter CREON.*

CREON. CHORUS.

*Cr.* O citizens, of that atrocious crime

With which the King doth charge me, late apprized,  
Such charge I cannot brook. If, in the hour  
Of general suffering, he suspect that I  
Have sought to wrong him, or in word or act,  
E'en life itself were valueless to me,  
Thus coupled with dishonour ; for this charge  
Involves no trivial detriment, but seems  
Of gravest import, were I deemed by thee  
And by my friends a traitor to my country.

*Ch.* Nay, but from vehemence of wrath this charge  
Burst rashly forth, not cool deliberate thought.

*Cr.* Whence could it seem, that, by our wiles  
suborned,  
The prophet framed these falsehoods ?

*Ch.* So, indeed,  
The King affirmed ; but on what grounds, I know not.

*Cr.* With mind unwarped, and unperverted eye,  
Did he thus charge me ?

*Ch.* Sooth I cannot tell ;  
I do not scrutinize the acts of princes.  
But lo ! himself approaches from the palace.

*Enter ŒDIPUS.*

ŒDIPUS. CREON. CHORUS.

*Œd.* Ha! wherefore cam'st thou hither? Is thy  
brow

So armed with bold presumption, that thou dar'st  
Still tread our courts, a false convicted traitor,  
Convicted in thy scheme to shed our blood,  
And steal into a throne? Say, by the Gods,  
What folly, what supineness, hast thou marked  
In me, to form an enterprise like this?  
Or didst thou think I had no eye to trace  
Thy wiles — when traced, no firmness to revenge  
them?

Doth not thy rash attempt proclaim thee senseless,  
Without or friends or forces, to affect  
The throne, by armies and by wealth attained?

*Cr.* Know'st thou what thou wouldst do? To  
our reply

Grant first impartial audience; learn, then judge.

*Œd.* Aye, thou art mighty in the strife of words;  
But I am slow to learn of one like thee,  
Whom I have proved rebellious and perverse.

*Cr.* First do thou hear what I would fain reply.

*Œd.* So thou reply not thus, “ I am no villain.”

*Cr.* If thou dost deem this self-willed senseless  
pride

Will aught avail thee, thou art most unwise.

*Œd.* And if thou deem'st to work thy kinsman  
wrong,

And 'scape unpunished, thou art most unwise.

*Cr.* Thy words have show of justice ; but explain  
Wherein I thus have wronged thee.

*Œd.* Didst thou then,  
Or didst thou not, persuade me here to summon  
This holy and most venerable prophet ?

*Cr.* I did, and still my counsel is the same.

*Œd.* How long a space hath now elapsed since  
Laius —

*Cr.* What act performed ? I cannot see thy drift.

*Œd.* Fell thus obscurely by a ruffian hand ?

*Cr.* We must retrace a length of years obscure.

*Œd.* Did this sage prophet then profess his art ?

*Cr.* Unmatched, as now, in wisdom, and esteemed  
With equal reverence.

*Œd.* Did he, at that time,  
Make mention of my name ?

*Cr.* Never ; at least,  
Not in my presence.

*Œd.* 'Did ye not enforce  
Strict inquisition for your murdered Lord?

*Cr.* How could we pass it by? Our search was  
vain.

*Œd.* Why spake not then this sage diviner thus?

*Cr.* I know not, and strict silence would preserve  
On points unknown.

*Œd.* One point, at least, thou know'st;  
And, if true wisdom guide thee, wilt disclose it.

*Cr.* Name it! I will not aught I know deny.

*Œd.* Were not the prophet basely leagued with  
thee,

He had not charged me with the death of Laius.

*Cr.* If thus he speaks, thou know'st. I claim in  
turn

To ask of thee as thou hast asked of me.

*Œd.* Ask what thou wilt, I never shall be proved  
A base assassin.

*Cr.* Is my sister thine,  
Thine by the nuptial tie?

---

<sup>1</sup> This passage furnishes another refutation of the objection noticed above. It had never even entered into the mind of Œdipus, that the inquiry into the death of Laius could possibly be neglected; hence his ardour in the investigation, otherwise inexplicable, is satisfactorily accounted for.

*Œd.* To such a question  
I cannot give denial.

*Cr.* Dost thou not  
Divide with her the empire of the land ?

*Œd.* 'Tis my chief pride to grant her every wish.

*Cr.* Do not I hold an equal rank with both ?

*Œd.* Thence dost thou seem indeed a faithless  
friend.

*Cr.* Not if thou weigh my words, as I weighed  
thine,

With cool and temperate judgment. First reflect,  
Who would prefer the terrors of a throne  
To fearless sleep, with equal power combined ?  
Nor I, nor any whom true wisdom guides,  
Would seek the empty pageant of a crown,  
Before the real potency of Kings.

Now, void of fears, I gain my wish from thee ;  
Were I a King, full oft must I renounce it.

How, then, could empire be to me more dear  
Than this serene, yet not less potent sway ?

I am not thus by flattering hope beguiled,  
To quit substantial good for empty honour.

All now is pleasure ; all men court me now ;  
They who desire thy favour seek my aid

To advocate their cause ; through me they gain

The boon solicited. And should I then  
Renounce such pleasures for the pomp of empire ?  
So wild a scheme the prudent soul discards.  
Such plots I never loved, and would disdain  
To mingle with the guilty band who frame them.  
If thou dost seek a proof, to Delphi send,  
Ask if aright the oracle I brought thee.  
Shouldst thou detect me leaguings with the Seer  
To work thee wrong, be instant death my meed,  
Twice doomed,—by thy decree, and by mine own ;  
But tax me not with guilt on vague suspicion.  
To deem the good unworthy, or account  
Alike the base and noble, is unjust.  
The man who drives an upright friend to exile,  
Doth wound himself no less, than if he struck  
At his own valued life. Of this, in time,  
Shalt thou be well convinced ; long space it asks  
To prove the stainless honour of the just,  
One day suffices to detect a traitor..

*Ch.* Well hath he said, O King, to one forewarned  
Of falling ; quick resolves are rarely safe.

*Œd.* When one is quick to frame insidious plots,  
I too have need of quickness to repel him.  
If I remain inactive, he will gain  
His traitorous end, while my slow cares avail not.

*Cr.* What is thy will?—To force me into exile?

*Œd.* Nay, exile shall not be thy doom, but death.

*Cr.* When thou hast proved what merits such a sentence.

*Œd.* Speak'st thou as one who meditates resistance?

*Cr.* I see thee swerve from wisdom.

*Œd.* Not unwise

In mine own cause.

*Cr.* Nor shouldst thou be in mine.

*Œd.* Thou art a villain.

*Cr.* If thou know'st no crime?—

*Œd.* Yet will I rule.

*Cr.* Thou shalt not tyrannize.

*Œd.* Thebes! Thebes!

*Cr.* <sup>2</sup> And I, too, have a part in Thebes;

It is not thine alone.

*Ch.* Princes, forbear!

In happy moment, lo! from out the palace

<sup>2</sup> The validity of Creon's defence will be more duly appreciated, if we reflect that he had actually been raised to the throne upon the death of Laius, though he afterwards voluntarily resigned the crown in favour of the destroyer of the Sphinx, and deliverer of his country.



Jocasta comes ; her presence may appease  
The growing rancour of this desperate strife.

*Enter* JOCASTA.

JOCASTA, ŒDIPUS, CREON, CHORUS.

*Jo.* Why, O unhappy princes! have ye raised  
This unadvisèd strife, nor blush to wake  
Your private feuds when public woes distract us?  
Wilt thou not home, my lord, and thou, too, Creon,  
Nor from slight cause excite severer ills?

*Cr.* My sister; Œdipus, thy husband, wills me  
A dreadful doom. <sup>3</sup>Two ills await my choice;  
Or death, or exile from my native land.

*Œd.* I own it, Lady, since with basest arts  
Have I exposed him plotting for my life.

---

<sup>3</sup> Two ills await my choice. Yet Œdipus had refused the election, and peremptorily denounced the severer penalty;

Exile shall not be thy doom, but death.

We must suppose that the fiery arrogance of Œdipus is more strikingly displayed by its contrast to the mildness and forbearance of Creon.

*Cr.* If I have done it, if the charge be true,  
May Heaven's dread curse descend at once to blast me.

*Jo.* Oh, by the Gods, my Œdipus, believe him ;  
Revere the solemn test that seals his truth ;  
Regard me, too, and these thy faithful friends.

STROPHE I.

*Ch.* <sup>4</sup> By prompt reflection swayed,  
O King ! I pray thee, yield.

*Œd.* Wherein shall I accord thy prayer ?

*Ch.* Revere the prince, before  
Not senseless proved, now bound by solemn oath.

*Œd.* Know'st thou what thou wouldst ask ?

*Ch.* I know.

*Œd.* Then speak.

*Ch.* Forbear to charge a friend with crimes un-  
proved,  
<sup>5</sup> Who calls the Gods to witness for his truth.

<sup>4</sup> This is the first variation of metre in the original. What difference was hereby occasioned in the recitation, it is perhaps vain to inquire. The probability appears, that the dialogue was accompanied with music, somewhat analogous to our own serious opera.

<sup>5</sup> *Εἰσγῆ* : some read *αἰσγῆ*, *purum*, *labis expertem*. The word itself signifies " qui jurejurando se obstrinxit."

*Œd.* In such request, know well, thou dost but  
 seek  
 Thy monarch's death, or exile from the land.

## STROPHE II.

*Ch.* No ! by yon radiant Sun,  
 °Prince of the Powers above,  
 Low may I fall, a godless, friendless wretch,  
 If e'er my bosom harboured thought like this.  
 'Tis my poor country's woe  
 That rankles in my breast,  
 And now must strike a deeper blow,  
 If to our common ills be added yours.

*Œd.* Then let him hence, though certain death  
 ensue,  
 Or I be thrust with infamy to exile.  
 Thy plea awakes my sympathy, not his ;  
 Go where he will, my quenchless hate attend him.

*Cr.* Even in relenting art thou stern ; thy wrath  
 Too far indulged, most fearful. Souls like thine  
 Are the just authors of their own remorse.

*Œd.* Wilt thou not leave me, and depart ?

° Προμὸς, dux, antesignanus.

*Cr.* I go,  
Unknown by thee, but still by these deemed righteous.  
[*Exit* CREON.]

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE I.

*Ch.* Why, Lady, dost thou pause  
To lead thy lord away?

*Jo.* First tell me what inflamed their wrath?

*Ch.* Suspicion from dark words  
Arose, and e'en a groundless charge offends.

*Jo.* By both preferred?

*Ch.* Even so.

*Jo.* And what the cause?

*Ch.* Enough, enough I deem it, when the state  
Is plunged in grief, to cease where they too ceased.

*Œd.* Mark how thy speech, although I know  
thee worthy,  
Tends but to trouble and depress my heart!

ANTISTROPHE II.

*Ch.* My Lord, I spake not once  
Unmeaning words alone,  
But deem me void of wisdom, and bereft

Of sage reflection, if I fall from thee,  
Who, when in adverse storms  
My much-loved country strove,  
Didst steer her to a prosperous port.  
O, if thou canst, be thus our pilot now !

*Jo.* Nay, by the Gods, inform me too, O King !  
What to such rancour first inflamed thy wrath ?

*Œd.* I will, for I revere thee more than these ;  
’Twas Creon, who hath framed a treacherous wile.

*Jo.* Say, if thou canst convict him of the crime.

*Œd.* He dares to tax me with the death of Laius.

*Jo.* Himself th’ accuser, or apprized by others ?

*Œd.* He hath suborned that false malignant seer,  
Who claims free license for his slanderous tongue.

*Jo.* Dispel the thoughts that agitate thy breast.  
Hear me, and learn, that none of mortal birth  
Can trace the future by prophetic skill.

The proof of this concisely will I show.

An oracle to Laius once came forth,

(I will not say by Phœbus self denounced,

But by his ministers,) that fate ordained him

To perish by a son whom I should bear ;—

And yet, as rumour tells, where three ways meet,  
By foreign ruffians was the monarch slain.

Our child was born, but ere three days had past,

Piercing the joints, he bound the infant's feet,  
And cast him forth by menial hands to die  
On an untrodden rock. In nought the word  
Of Phœbus was fulfilled ;—nor was the child  
His father's murderer, nor did Laius meet  
The doom he dreaded from a filial hand ;  
Yet thus the doughty oracles declared.  
Then heed them not. If Phœbus wills the search,  
He will himself the latent truth disclose.

*Œd.* O Lady, as I listen, how my thoughts  
Distempered wander, and my soul is torn!

*Jo.* What strange solicitude prompts words like  
these ?

*Œd.* I heard, or seemed to hear, that Laius fell  
Beneath the ruffian-band, where three ways meet.

*Jo.* So rumour whispered then, and still pro-  
claims.

*Œd.* What region was the scene of this dark  
deed ?

*Jo.* <sup>7</sup>Phocis the realm is called, the parted road  
From Delphi and from Daulia blends in one.

*Œd.* What time hath now elapsed since this befel ?

<sup>7</sup> Delphi and Daulia are separated by Mount Parnassus in Phocis, between the Gulf of Crissa and the Gulf of Opus.

*Jo.* 'Twas through the state divulged, short time  
ere thou

Didst rise in glory to the throne of Thebes.

*Œd.* Almighty Jove! to what hast thou reserved  
me?

*Jo.* My Œdipus, what means this wild dismay?

*Œd.* Oh, ask not, ask not, tell me of this Laius.  
What was his aspect, what his age, O speak!

*Jo.* His port was lofty, the first snows of age  
Had tinged his locks, his form resembled thine.

*Œd.* Wretch that I am, on mine own head, it  
seems,  
Have I called down this dread destroying curse.

*Jo.* How say'st thou, King! I tremble to behold  
thee.

*Œd.* I fear the prophet saw, alas! too clearly.  
One question more, and all will be disclosed.

*Jo.* I tremble—but will truly tell thee all.

*Œd.* Went the King private, or with many guards  
Encompassed, as became his regal sway?

*Jo.* His followers were but five—a herald one;  
Sole rode the monarch in a single car.

---

This passage confirms our conjecture, page 28, that the  
crime was not committed within the territories of Thebes.

*Œd.* Alas ! alas ! 'tis all too evident ;

But, Lady, who this sad narration brought ?

*Jo.* A slave, the sole survivor of the train.

*Œd.* Is he now present in the palace ?

*Jo.* No.

Returning thence, when he beheld thee crowned  
Monarch in Thebes, and Laius now no more,  
Clasping my hand, with suppliant prayers, he craved  
Some rural charge to tend our herds afar,  
Where never more might he behold the city.  
Such charge I gave assenting ; though a slave,  
He well deserved a richer recompense.

*Œd.* How can we bid his instant presence hither ?

*Jo.* Soon shall he come. Yet wherefore seek'st  
thou this ?

*Œd.* I tremble, Lady, for myself, and much  
Hath now been said to wake my wish to see him.

*Jo.* He will arrive ere long. Meanwhile, O  
King,

I, too, am worthy to partake thy cares.

*Œd.* I will not this deny thee, to such height  
Of expectation raised ; to whom more dear  
Could I confide my fortunes, than to thee ?

My sire was Polybus, fair Corinth's Lord,  
My mother Merope, of Doric race ;



I, too, was counted noblest of the state,  
Till chanced a strange event that claimed my wonder,  
Though scarce deserving of the care it caused.  
One at a banquet in a drunken mood  
Reviled me, as not sprung from Polybus.  
Oppressed with weighty thoughts, throughout the  
day

I scarce could curb my wrath, and on the next,  
From both my parents warmly asked the truth.  
They heard my tale, incensed with deepest rage  
Against th' inebriate babbler. Though with them  
I was delighted, yet th' opprobrious taunt  
Burnt in my breast, and rankled in my soul.  
Unknown to both I hastened to the shrine  
Of Delphi; Phœbus, reckless of my prayer,  
Dismissed me thence dishonoured; but denounced  
A long, long train of dark and fearful sorrows;—  
That I, in wedlock to my mother bound,  
Should bring to light a race accursed of men,  
And in a father's blood my hands embrue.  
Hearing these bodings dire, I bade farewell  
To the loved realm of Corinth, by the stars  
My wandering course directing far away,  
That never, never might I see the shame  
Of those dread oracles fulfilled in me.

I passed those very regions in my course  
 Where fell the murdered monarch. To thee, Lady,  
 I will reveal the truth. As I pursued  
 My onward journey, nigh the triple path,  
 A herald there encountered me, with one  
 Borne, as thou said'st, in single car sublime.  
 The leader then, and that old chieftain too,  
 With violent impulse thrust me from the path ;  
 I struck the rude aggressor in mine anger,  
 But the old man observing, when I passed  
 Beside his chariot, with his double goad  
 Smote on my brow. Unequal was the meed  
 My hand returned. <sup>3</sup> I raised my vengeful staff,  
 And straight he rolled expiring from the car.  
 I slew the whole. But if this stranger prove  
 The murdered Laius, who of all mankind  
 Exists more deeply wretched than myself,  
 Oh ! who more hateful to th' avenging Gods ?  
 Nor citizen nor stranger to my need

---

<sup>3</sup> Œdipus though, as we observed, much more unfortunate than guilty, cannot be wholly vindicated. When he had been apprised that he was destined to be the murderer of his father, ought he, on so trivial a provocation, to have revenged the insult with death ? The plea of self-defence may palliate, but cannot justify, the deed.

Henceforth may grant the refuge of a home ;  
None may accost, but all must spurn me from them ;  
And I, O how unconscious, on myself  
Invoked the withering curse. I, by whose hand  
His blood was shed, pollute his nuptial couch—  
Am I not all abandoned, all defiled ?  
If I must fly, and, flying, ne'er behold  
My best-loved friends, or tread my natal earth,  
Or else am doomed, in most unnatural ties,  
To wed my mother, and my father slay,  
Good Polybus, who gave me life and nurture,  
Would he not rightly judge who deemed these woes  
The work of some inexorable God ?  
Never, O never, ye most holy Powers,  
May I behold that day. Oh may I sink  
To death's more friendly darkness, ere my life  
Be marked and sullied by a stain so foul.

*Ch.* Thy words, O King ! are fearful ; yet retain  
Thy hope, till from this herdsman thou hast  
learned.

*Œd.* I but await his presence, for in him  
Concentres all the hope that now is left me.

*Jo.* When he arrives, what is thy purpose next ?

*Œd.* I will inform thee ; if his tale agree  
With thine in all things, I escape the crime.

*Jo.* What of such moment did my words imply?

*Œd.* Thou saidst, the man ascribed the death  
of Laius

To banded ruffians ; if he still adhere

To this report, I am at once absolved;—

The deed of numbers is no deed of one :

If he but name a single murderer,

'Tis but too plain the deadly act was mine.

*Jo.* But this, be well convinced, he then affirmed,

Nor can he now retract his former tale—

Not I alone, th' assembled state is witness.

If aught he change the tenour of his words,

Still, my good Lord, it cannot thence appear

That Laius fell, as Phœbus' voice foretold,

Slain by my son. Alas ! my hapless child

Slew not,—but perished ere his father fell.

° So lightly do I hold each oracle,

No longer would I waste a thought on either.

° It should here be remarked, that, to this period, nothing has occurred to criminate Jocasta. It was necessary, for the sake of reconciling the audience to her subsequent miseries and death, that she should not be altogether guiltless. With judgement not less discerning than the moral he inculcates is impressive, the poet has represented her indifferent to the

*Œd.* Nor can I blame thee, but with speed despatch  
A summons to this herdsman,—linger not.

*Jo.* Straight will I send. But pass we now within.  
Nought of thy pleasure shall be left undone.

[*Exeunt* JOCASTA and ŒDIPUS

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

O! be the lot for ever mine  
Unsullied to maintain,  
In act and word, with awe divine,  
What potent laws ordain.  
Laws spring from purer realms above,  
Their father is th' Olympian Jove;  
Nor is their heaven-born might controuled  
By aught of meaner mortal mould.  
Ne'er shall oblivion veil their front sublime;  
Th' indwelling God is great, nor dreads the waste  
of time.

---

Gods. Characters of unmixed good, as Shakspeare's *Cor-  
delia*, and even our author's *Antigone*, have been found too  
affecting for representation.

**ANTISTROPHE I.**

Pride forms the Tyrant. If elate  
With power increased in vain,  
On which no prosperous issues wait,—  
Pride leads him on to gain  
The steep ascent,—then from the brow,  
Hurls him to ruin's gulf below.  
But ah! if aught of counsel sage  
May yet my country's wound assuage,  
By the kind Gods be favouring issue given—  
I will not cease to ask the bounteous aid of  
Heaven.

**STROPHE II.**

But if a haughty wretch proceed  
To vaunting word or daring deed,  
Who nor avenging Justice fears,  
Nor the pure shrines of Heaven reveres,  
Destruction be his meed,  
To guilt's ill-omened transports due;—  
Unless in justice he pursue  
Just gains, from impious deeds refrain,—  
Nor madly grasp, with hand profane,  
When Heaven forbids the deed.

<sup>10</sup> Who yet will curb in due controul  
 The wildest wishes of his soul,  
 If glory crown the guilty head;  
 And why do I this hallowed chorus lead?

## ANTISTROPHE II.

And never to the central shrine  
 Will I repair with rites divine,  
 Nor bend at Abæ's hallowed fane,  
 Nor tread Olympia's courts again,  
     Till this mysterious word  
 To all its certain truth approve.—  
 O Lord of Heaven, eternal Jove!  
 If by thy sceptre all are swayed,  
 Let not Oblivion's trackless shade  
     Conceal this crime abhorred.—  
 They spurn the prescient word of Heaven,  
 In years long past, to Laius given,

<sup>10</sup> Τίς ἔτι ποτ' ἐν τοῖσδ' ἀνῆρ

Θυμῷ βίλη δέξεται

Ψυχᾶς ἀμύνει;

Quisnam, si ita se res habet, cupiditatum tela ab animo  
 arcere volet.—Erfurdt.

No reverence is to Phœbus paid,  
And the due honours of th' Immortals fade.

*Re-enter* JOCASTA.

JOCASTA. CHORUS.

*Jo.* Princes of Thebes, we deemed it meet to seek  
The temples of the Gods, and in our hands  
These votive wreaths, this odorous incense bear.  
The soul of Œdipus on a wild sea  
Of anxious care is tossed;—nor, as becomes  
The prudent, weighs by former oracles  
This late response, but lends a willing ear  
To all who speak of terrors. Since my voice  
Avails no more, Lycæan King, to thee  
I fly, for thou art' nearest to our need,  
And come in prayer a suppliant to thy shrine,

---

' "Αγνιστος γὰρ ἱ. Dr. Francklin renders these words in a metaphorical sense, "Near to help the wretched." There is no occasion to depart from the literal sense. The temple of Phœbus was probably situated nearest to the palace.



That thou mayst grant us thine auspicious aid ;  
 Since all now tremble, when we thus behold  
 Our very Pilot shuddering and appalled.

*Enter* CORINTHIAN.

JOCASTA, CORINTHIAN, CHORUS.

*Co.* Can ye inform me, strangers, where your  
 King,

Great Œdipus, his regal state maintains ;  
 Or, if ye know, where I may find the Monarch ?

*Ch.* These are th' imperial halls—he is within,—  
 This is his wife, the mother of his children.

*Co.* Blest may she be, and ever with the blest  
 Hold glad communion ; to her royal lord  
<sup>2</sup> A most accomplished consort.

<sup>2</sup> Παρτελῆς τίμια ἔχουσα. Perfection in the marriage-state is when the nuptial bed is blessed with children. Hence the Ἄδελφος τίμειο δῶμα, and the Ζευ τίμειο of Æschylus.—Potter.

This is the commencement of that περιπετσία, so highly extolled by the critics ; nothing can be more finely imagined, or more judiciously executed.

*Jo.* Equal joy

Attend thee, stranger,—thy kind greeting claims  
This due return of courtesy. But say,  
Whence cam'st thou to our Thebes, and what thy  
tidings?

*Co.* Joy to thine house, O Lady! and thy Lord.

*Jo.* What joy?—and from what region art thou  
come?

*Co.* From Corinth. At my words thou wilt rejoice;  
Why should'st thou not—yet fond regrets will rise.

*Jo.* What dost thou mean, and whence this two-  
fold influence?

*Co.* The assembled states of Isthmus, rumour tells,  
Will choose thy Lord to mount the vacant throne.

*Jo.* How vacant? Reigns not Polybus in Corinth?

*Co.* No more,—his only kingdom is the tomb.

*Jo.* Mean'st thou, old man, that Polybus is dead?

*Co.* May I, too, perish if my words be false.

*Jo.* Haste, haste, attendant, and convey with speed  
These tidings to your lord. Vain oracles!

Where are your bodings now? My Œdipus,  
Fearing to slay this man, forsook his country;  
Now Fate, and not *his* hand, hath laid him low.

*Enter ŒDIPUS.*

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTA, CORINTHIAN, CHORUS.

*Œd.* Why, my beloved Jocasta, hast thou sent  
To bid my presence hither?

*Jo.* Hear this man—  
Attend his tidings, and observe the end  
Of these most true and reverend oracles.

*Œd.* Who is this stranger—with what message  
charged?

*Jo.* He is from Corinth, thence despatched to tell  
thee  
That Polybus, thy father, is no more.

*Œd.* What sayst thou, stranger? Be thyself the  
speaker.

*Co.* If in plain terms I first must tell thee, King,  
Know, he hath gone the pathway to the tomb.

*Œd.* Died he by treason, or the chance of sickness?

*Co.* Slight ills dismiss the aged to their rest.

*Œd.* Then by disease, it seems, the monarch died.

*Co.* And bowed beneath a withering weight of  
years.

*Œd.* Ha! is it thus? Then, Lady, who would  
heed  
The Pythian shrine oracular, or birds

Clanging in air, by whose vain auspices  
 I was fore-doomed the murderer of my father?  
 In the still silence of the tomb he sleeps,  
 While I am here—the fatal sword untouched—  
 Unless he languished for his absent child,  
 And I was thus the author of his doom.  
 Now in the grave he lies, and with him rest  
 Those vain predictions, worthy of our scorn.

*Jo.* Did I not tell thee this before?

*Œd.* Thou didst—

But terror urged me onward.

*Jo.* Banish now

This vain solicitude.

*Œd.* Should I not fear

The dark pollution of my mother's bed?

*Jo.* Oh why should mortals fear, when fortune's  
 sway

Rules all, and wariest foresight nought avails.

Best to live on unheeding, as thou mayst.

And dread not thou thy mother's lawless couch ;

Oft is the soul dismayed by hideous dreams

Of guilt like this,—but life's rough path is found

Smoothest to him, who spurns these wild illusions.

*Œd.* I should admit the justice of thy plea,

Save that my mother lives ; while she survive,  
Though thou speak'st well, I cannot choose but fear.

*Jo.* Proof strong and sure thy father's fate affords.

*Œd.* Strong, I confess ;—my fears are for the living.

*Co.* And by what woman are these terrors roused ?

*Œd.* By Merope, the wife of Polybus.

*Co.* And what, to her relating, thus alarms thee ?

*Œd.* Stranger, a dark and hideous oracle.

*Co.* May it be told ?—or shouldst thou not disclose it

To other ears ?

*Œd.* I may and will disclose it.

Phœbus foretold that I should wed my mother,  
And shed with impious hand a father's blood.

For this I fled my own Corinthian towers  
To seek a distant home—that home was blest ;  
Though still I languished to embrace my parents.

*Co.* This fear then urged thee to renounce thy  
country ?

*Œd.* Old man, I would not be a father's murderer.

*Co.* Then wherefore, since thy welfare I regard,  
Should I forbear to rid thee of this terror ?

*Œd.* Do so, and rich shall be thy recompense.

*Co.* This hope impelled me here, that when our  
state

Hails thee her monarch, I might win thy favour.

*Œd.* Ne'er will I seek the authors of my birth.

*Co.* 'Tis plain, my son, thou know'st not what  
thou doest!

*Œd.* How! how! old man, by Heaven! unfold  
thy meaning.

*Co.* If this preclude thee from returning home—

*Œd.* I fear lest Phœbus saw, alas! too clearly!

*Co.* If thou dost dread pollution from thy parents—

*Œd.* That restless dread for ever haunts my soul.

*Co.* Know, then, thy terrors all are causeless here.

*Œd.* How so? if of these parents I was born?

*Co.* But Polybus is nought allied to thee.

*Œd.* How say'st thou? was not Polybus my father?

*Co.* No more than I—our claims are equal here.

*Œd.* Had he who gave me life no nearer claim  
Than thou, a stranger?

*Co.* Nor to him nor me

Ow'st thou thy birth.

*Œd.* Then wherefore did he grant  
A son's beloved name?

*Co.* He from my hand

Received thee as a gift.

*Œd.* With such fond love

How could he cherish thus an alien child?

*Co.* His former childless state to this impelled him.

*Œd.* Gav'st thou a purchased slave, or thine own  
child?

*Co.* I found thee in Cithæron's shadowy glades.

*Œd.* Why didst thou traverse those remoter vales?

*Co.* It was my charge to tend the mountain herds.

*Œd.* Wert thou a herdsman, and engaged for hire?

*Co.* I was, my son, but thy preserver too.

*Œd.* From what afflictions didst thou then pre-  
serve me?

*Co.* This let thy scarred and swollen feet attest.

*Œd.* Ah! why dost thou revive a woe long passed?

*Co.* I loosed thy bound and perforated feet.

*Œd.* Such foul reproach mine infancy endured.

*Co.* From this event arose the name thou bear'st.

*Œd.* Was it a father's or a mother's act?

By the good Gods inform me!

*Co.* This I cannot—

He may know more, perchance, who gave thee to me.

*Œd.* Thou didst receive me then from other  
hands,

Nor find me as by chance?

*Co.* No, to my hand  
Another herdsman gave thee.

*Œd.* Who was he?  
Canst thou inform me this?

*Co.* He was believed  
A slave of Laius.

*Œd.* What! of him who erst  
Ruled o'er this land?

*Co.* The same—this man to him  
Discharged a herdsman's office.

*Œd.* Lives he yet  
That I may see him?

*Co.* Ye—his countrymen—  
Are best prepared this question to resolve.

*Œd.* Is there of you who now attend our presence  
One who would know the herdsman he describes,  
Familiar erst or here, or in the field?  
Speak—for the time demands a prompt disclosure.

*Ch.* He is, I deem, no other than the man  
Whom thou before didst summon from the fields.  
This none can know more clearly than the Queen.

*Œd.* Think'st thou, O Queen, the man whose  
presence late  
We bade, is he of whom this stranger speaks?



*Jo.* Who—spake of whom?—Regard him not, nor dwell,

With vain remembrance, on unmeaning words!

*Œd.* Nay, Heaven forefend, when traces of my birth

Are thus unfolding, I should cease to follow.

*Jo.* Nay, by the Gods I charge thee! search no more,  
If life be precious still. Be it enough  
That I am most afflicted.

*Œd.* Cheer thee, lady!

<sup>4</sup> Though my descent were proved e'en trebly servile,  
No stain of infamy would light on thee.

*Jo.* Ah yield, I do conjure thee—seek no more.

*Œd.* I will not yield, till all be clearly known.

*Jo.* 'Tis for thy peace I warn thee—Yet be wise.

*Œd.* That very wisdom wounds my peace most deeply.

*Jo.* Unhappy—never mayst thou know thy birth.

<sup>4</sup> Though my descent were proved e'en trebly servile. In the original, *ὢς τρίτης ἑγὼ μητρὸς φανῶ τρίδουλος*, not if I were thrice a slave from a third mother; i. e. not if my mother, with her mother and grandmother, for three generations back, had been slaves.—Francklin.

*Œd.* Will none conduct this shepherd to our presence?

Leave her to triumph in her lordly race.

*Jo.* Woe, woe, unhappy! henceforth by that name  
Alone can I address thee, and by that  
Alone for ever.

[*Erit* JOCASTA.]

*Ch.* Whither, my good Lord,  
Hath the Queen parted, urged by wild dismay?  
I fear, I fear, lest this portentous silence  
Be but the prelude to impending woe.

*Œd.* Let the storm burst, I reckon not. I will on  
To trace my birth, though it be most obscure.  
Pride swells her thus, for in a woman's breast  
Pride reigns despotic, and she thinks foul scorn  
Of my ignoble birth. I deem myself  
The child of Fortune, in whose favouring smile  
I shall not be dishonoured. She alone  
Hath been my fostering parent; from low state  
My kindred months have raised me into greatness.  
Sprung from such lineage, none I heed beside,  
Nor blush reluctant to explore my birth.

[*Erit* ŒDIPUS.]

*Chorus.*

## STROPHE I.

If prophetic skill be mine,  
 If aright my soul divine,  
 By Olympus' brow I swear,  
 Thou, Cithæron, shalt declare  
 (Soon as mid to-morrow's sky  
 Shines the rounded moon on high)  
 The mystic word, and proudly own  
 Great Œdipus thy fostered son !  
 Then would we in sportive measure  
 Lead to thee the dance of pleasure,  
 For thy bounties richly poured,  
 On our country's honoured Lord.  
 Phœbus, Healing Power, to thee  
 Pleasing may my presage be !

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Which of all th' immortal host,  
 Can, my son, thy lineage boast ?  
 Did some ' Mountain-Dryad fair,  
 Thee to Pan the wanderer bear,

---

<sup>5</sup> Ουγάτηρ Λοξίς. Ουγάτης does not here denote filia, a

Pan who roams the sylvan height ; —  
 Or to Phœbus, Lord of Light,  
 For the young God delighted roves  
 O'er green hills crowned with shadowy groves.  
 Did the King, Cyllene swaying,  
 Did gay Bacchus ever straying  
 Woods and lofty crags among,  
 With the maids of sweetest song,  
 Greet thee, his illustrious son,  
 From some fair nymph of Helicon ?

*Re-enter* ŒDIPUS, 'CORINTHIAN.

ŒDIPUS, CORINTHIAN, CHORUS.

*Œd.* If aught I may conjecture, friends, of one  
 With whom I ne'er held converse, I behold  
 Th' expected herdsman : for his lengthened years  
 Accord ; and those who lead him, I discern,  
 For mine own menial train. But haply thou,  
 To whom familiar erst his face hath been,  
 Canst speak with more assurance.

---

daughter, but simply a maiden—"puella." So ἀλοχοί, simply *mulieres*.

*Ch.* Yea, I know him—

The herdsman he of Laius, in his charge  
Proved to his Lord most faithful.

*Œd.* First, I ask  
Of thee, Corinthian—is this man the same  
Whom thou didst now describe?

*Co.* This is the man.

*Enter HERDSMAN.*

ŒDIPUS, CORINTHIAN, HERDSMAN, CHORUS.

*Œd.* Approach, old man! look on me, and reply  
To my demand. Wert thou the slave of Laius?

*Herd.* I was his slave—bred in his house—not  
purchased.

*Œd.* What office didst thou hold? what task dis-  
charge?

*Herd.* My better part of life was passed in  
tending  
The monarch's flocks.

*Œd.* What regions wert thou then  
Wont to frequent?

*Herd.* Cithæron, and the meads  
Adjacent.

*Œd.* Dost thou e'er remember there  
To have beheld this man?

*Herd.* What task performing—  
Which man dost thou intend?

*Œd.* I mean this man  
Here present; hadst thou converse with him there?

*Herd.* Not such, that I can instantly retrace it.

*Co.* No marvel this, O King! But I will soon  
Revive events forgotten, for I know  
He cannot but recal what time he fed  
Two flocks, I one, in green Cithæron's vales.  
'Three months we thus consorted, from the Spring  
Till cold Arcturus brings the wintry blast.  
To mine own stalls I then drove back my herds,  
He to the stalls of Laius led his charge.  
Say, are my words unwarranted by fact?

*Herd.* Thy tale is true, though told of times long  
passed.

*Co.* Then answer. Dost thou recollect the babe

<sup>6</sup> Three months, &c. Yet from Spring to the rising of Arcturus, which occurs, according to Pliny, eleven days before the autumnal equinox, there is an interval of six months. Can we reconcile this by supposing ἡμέρας χρόνος to mean seasons?

Thou gav'st me there, as mine own child to cherish ?

*Herd.* What wouldst thou? Whither do thy questions tend?

*Co.* This is that child, my friend, who stands before thee.

*Herd.* A curse light on thee! wilt thou not be silent?

*Œd.* Reprove him not, old man, for thine own words,

Far more than his, demand a stern reprover.

*Herd.* In what do I offend thee, my good Lord?

*Œd.* In that thou speak'st not plainly of the child Of whom he asks thee.

*Herd.* But he speaks in darkness,  
Mere empty babbling.

*Œd.* If thou wilt not answer  
To mild persuasion, force shall soon compel thee.

*Herd.* Oh! for the love of Heaven, respect mine age.

*Œd.* Will ye not seize and instant bind his hands?

*Herd.* Alas! what is my crime? what wouldst thou learn?

*Œd.* Didst thou commit to him the child he spake of?

*Herd.* I did:—O, had that moment been my last!

*Œd.* This shall be, if thou wilt not speak the truth.

*Herd.* And if I speak it, I am trebly lost.

*Œd.* This man, it seems, still struggles to elude us.

*Herd.* No, I confessed long since I gave the child.

*Œd.* And whence received? thine own, or from  
another?

*Herd.* No, not mine own; I from another's hand  
Bare him.

*Œd.* And from what Theban, from what roof?

*Herd.* O, by the Gods! my Lord, inquire no  
further.

*Œd.* If I repeat th' inquiry, thou art lost.

*Herd.* The palace of King Laius gave him birth.

*Œd.* Sprung from a slave, or of the royal stock?

*Herd.* Ah! how I shrink to breathe the fatal truth.

*Œd.* And I to hear it; yet it must be heard.

*Herd.* The child was called the son of Laius; here  
Thy royal consort can inform thee better.

*Œd.* Didst thou from her receive him?

*Herd.* Yea, O King!

*Œd.* And for what purpose?

*Herd.* That I might destroy him.

*Œd.* What—the unnatural mother?

*Herd.* She was awed  
By woe-denouncing oracles.



*Œd.* What woe?

*Herd.* That he should prove the murderer of his parents.

*Œd.* Why, then, to this old man thy charge consign?

*Herd.* From pity, O my Lord. I deemed that he  
To his own land would bear the child afar.  
He saved him to despair! If thou art he  
Of whom he spake, how dark a doom is thine!

*Œd.* Woe! woe! 'tis all too fatally unveiled.  
Thou Light! O may I now behold thy beams  
For the last time! Unhallowed was my birth,  
In closest ties united, where such ties  
Were most unnatural;—with that blood defiled,  
From whose pollution most the heart recoils.

*Exit ŒDIPUS.*

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

Sad generations of mankind,  
How oft your fleeting date I deem  
Of vanity and woe combined!  
For what is transport but a dream

That seems awhile to beam and bless,  
Then wanes away to wretchedness?  
Thy fortunes, my unhappy lord,  
Thy woes the mournful proof afford;  
And henceforth never shall my breast  
Deem mortal blest.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Raised by strong hand and daring aim,  
Sublime to glory's proudest height,  
Who erst—Eternal Jove—o'ercame  
The harpy-taloned Maid of night  
Chaunting dark strains—and stood the tower  
Of Thebes in death's impending hour;—  
For this, O King, thy wisdom's meed,  
My country's crown adorns thy head;  
For this her stately towers obey  
Thy regal sway.

STROPHE II.

But now thy tale I hear,  
Ah! who so deeply sunk as thou?  
What horrors are thy portion now,  
What hopeless toil severe?  
Alas for thee! O King renowned!

'To one dark couch the son and sire  
 Alike the nuptial union bound ;—  
 How could that couch, in silence so profound,  
 Bear such pollution dire?

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Time with all-searching eye  
 Dragged thee reluctant into light,  
 And doth on son and sire requite  
 This foul unnatural tie.  
 O had it ne'er been mine to see  
 The son of Laius !—o'er thy doom,  
 I pour the plaints of sympathy.  
 By thee, O Prince ! I rose to life ;—by thee  
 Have closed mine eyes in gloom !

*Enter* MESSENGER.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Mess.* O chiefs, most honoured of my native  
 land,

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<sup>1</sup> In the original, " Cui unus et idem suffecit portus, quo filius et pater et sponsus exciperentur."—Brunck. It is trusted, that the classical reader will excuse the absence of a *literal* translation in this passage, as he will readily appreciate the motives which occasioned its omission.

What horrors will ye hear, what woes behold,  
 What pitying anguish suffer, if indeed  
 Ye still revere the house of Labdacus.  
 'Did Phasis blend with Ister's mighty flood,  
 Both could not wash the deadly taint away  
 Of those dark deeds, which, latent in yon towers,  
 Soon shall burst forth to day's abhorrent light,  
 Spontaneous, unconstrained. Ills self-imposed  
 With keener anguish wound the bleeding heart.

*Ch.* There wanted nought to aggravate the woes  
 We knew already. What remains to tell?

*Mess.* What may be quickly told, and learnt as  
 soon.

Hear, first,—the loved Jocasta is no more.

*Ch.* Ill-fated Queen! what caused her hapless  
 doom?

*Mess.* She was herself the cause. Of these dark  
 deeds

The worst is latent, since no eye beheld

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<sup>2</sup> Crimes were imagined by the ancients to be expiated by  
 river or sea water. So Æneas, in Virgil:

Me bello e tanto digressum et cæde recenti  
 Attrectare nefas, donec me flumine vivo  
 Abluero.

Its horrors; yet the tenour of her woes,  
As memory can retrace them, thou shalt hear.

When, frantic with despair, she wildly rushed  
Within the portal, to the nuptial couch,  
Rending her hair with ruthless hands, she fled;  
Then, entering, closely barred the doors within,  
And on the long-departed Laius calls,  
Making sad mention of that earlier son  
By whom her Lord should perish, leaving her,  
To her own child to bear a lawless race;—  
Then o'er that couch bewailed, where she brought  
forth

A husband from a husband, sons from sons;  
And then and there, I know not how, she perished.  
For with wild clamours Œdipus rushed in,  
Nor longer thought we of the hapless Queen;  
For every eye on him was riveted.  
On, on he hurried, raving for a sword,  
Raving for her, his wife,—yet not his wife,  
The mother of his children and himself.  
Infuriate thus, some demon urged him on,  
We, who were present, spake not. With deep groans  
Led by that viewless guide, he madly rushed  
Against the two-fold portals, and beat down  
The massive bolts, and burst into the chamber.

Suspended there his wretched wife we saw,  
 Wreathed in the twisted cord. Soon as he marked  
 Th' appalling sight, with agonizing groans  
 He loosed the strangling noose ; but when on earth  
 Her breathless corpse was laid,—oh, then ensued  
 A hideous scene of horror. From her robe  
 Tearing the golden clasps that bound her zone,  
 Deep in his eyes the piercing point he plunged,  
 Exclaiming thus,—that never, never more,  
 Her should they see, the sufferings he endured,  
 Or the dire deeds he wrought,—that, henceforth  
 quenched

In outer darkness, ne'er should they behold  
 Those whom to see beseeemed him now no more ;—  
 Nor know the forms he most desired to know.  
 Thus, imprecating curses on his head,  
 Again, again, and yet again, he struck,  
 Raising his eye-lids, till the bleeding balls  
 His cheek empurpled, nor in scanty flood  
 Gushed the quick drops, but from his brow poured  
 down

A shower of tears and crimson gore combined.  
 Such storms of fate have burst alike on both—  
 The wife, the husband, in one ruin whelmed—  
 Their former state, which heretofore we deemed,

And justly too, most blessed ;—on this day  
Is changed to wailing, horror, death, and worse  
Than death, dishonour. Misery hath no name  
For aught that blends not in his cup of sorrow.

*Ch.* Is there no pause of respite from his pangs ?

*Mess.* He calls aloud, with clamours wild and  
shrill,

T' unbar the portals, and to all the Thebans,  
Expose the guilty murderer of his father,  
His mother's—Oh, I cannot, dare not breathe  
His heart-appalling words : he bids them drive him  
Far, far from Thebes, nor refuge still afford  
To him, th' accursed, by himself condemned.  
Yet ah, a guide and added strength he needs ;  
His agony is more than he can bear.  
Soon wilt thou see him. Lo ! the close-barred gates  
Are bursting now asunder. Thou wilt soon  
Behold a sight, that well might wake relenting  
E'en in the bosom of remorseless hate.

*Enter ŒDIPUS.*

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

*Ch.* O sight of grief to human eye—

The most appalling far of all  
On which I e'er have gazed.—Ill-fated King!  
What frenzy seized thee—what indignant God  
Hath heaped this sad extremity of woe  
On thy devoted head?—

Alas, alas, unhappy! But mine eye  
Recoils to meet thee, though of much I pant  
To ask, and much to hear and to behold,  
Such dread thy pangs inspire.—

*Œd.* Woe! woe! unutterable woe!  
I am indeed most wretched. Where, oh where  
Is the lost wanderer borne, and whence that voice,  
That breaks upon mine ear?—  
Where, Fortune, hast thou plunged me now?—

*Ch.* In horrors, from which eye and ear recoil.

STROPHE I.

*Œd.* O thou dense cloud  
Of black and baleful darkness, deepening round,  
Boundless, eternal, and by hope uncheered!  
Oh wretch, wretch, wretch! How piercing is the  
sting  
Of frenzy, and the memory of the past!

*Ch.* No marvel if, in agonies like thine,  
Redoubled ills inflict a double wound.



## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Œd.* What! thou, my friend,  
 Thou only firm and faithful, who art still  
 Regardful of the blind!—O misery!  
     is dark around me, still I hear,  
     friendly accents through my darkness.  
     Idly-daring, how couldst thou endure  
     thus thine eyes,—what God impelled  
     thee?

## STROPHE II.

*Œd.* 'Twas Phœbus, Phœbus, O my friends, alone  
 Who wrought my doom of woe,  
 My hopeless agony;—  
 But this dark deed no hand, save mine, hath dared.  
 Yet what were sight to me,  
 For whom all Nature wears one hue of blackness?  
*Ch.* Alas! I can but own thy words most true.

## STROPHE III.

*Œd.* What now remains to court

<sup>1</sup> Shuddering I shrunk from Nature's face,  
 Where every hue that charmed before,  
 The blackness of my bosom wore.—BYRON.

My gaze, or wake my love,  
 Henceforth what voice shall gladden my dull ear?  
 Drive me to instant exile from your land,  
 Drive me, O friends! this widely-blasting pest,  
 This most accursed of men,  
 And trebly hateful to the Powers above!  
*Ch.* Wretched alike in soul as in thy doom!  
 Would to the Gods that I had never known thee!

ANTISTROPHE II.

*Œd.* Perdition seize the wretch, in the wild wood,  
 Who first my feet unbound,  
 And from impending fate  
 Released and rescued me,—unwelcome care!  
 O had I perished then,  
 Nor brought this ruin on myself,—my kindred!  
*Ch.* Fain must I breathe an echo to thy prayer.

ANTISTROPHE III.

*Œd.* I had not then been doomed  
 The murderer of my sire,  
 Nor by mankind for lawless nuptials scorned—  
 Now I am most defiled—the child of guilt—  
 The sire of sons to her who calls *me* son.  
 Whate'er of heavier woe,

In woe exists, that Œdipus must bear.

*Ch.* I know not how thy counsel to commend;—  
Better to die at once than pine in darkness.

*Œd.* If void of wisdom I have done this deed,  
Spare now reproof and counsel; both are vain.

Descending to the dead, I know not how

I could have borne to gaze upon my sire,

Or my unhappy mother; for to them

Crimes dark as mine, not death can e'er atone.

And could the sight of my fair budding offspring,

Springing from whence they sprung, be sweet to me?

Oh never with these eyes! I could not gaze

On this fair city, these imperial towers,

Or e'en the hallowed temples of the Gods,

Of which, though once the noblest in our Thebes,

My own stern sentence hath for ever reft me!

Myself enjoining all to spurn afar

The wretch, proclaimed accursed by the Gods,

And sprung from Laius' stock. When I disclosed

Mine own dishonour, could I still behold

These with bold front and firm undrooping eye?

Oh never, never! Could I e'en obstruct

The avenues of sound, I would not cease

To rend this wretched body, till with sight

The power of hearing fled; 'tis some relief

To lose the bitter sense of agony.

Oh why, Cithæron, didst thou yield me refuge,  
Nor grant me swift destruction, that to men  
I ne'er had shown the secret of my birth?

Oh Polybus, oh Corinth, and the home  
Once fondly deemed my father's, what a form  
Of specious glory but of latent ills

In me ye cherished, who am now revealed  
The guilty child of parents not less guilty!

Ye triple ways, thou lone secluded dell,  
Thou grove, and dark recess in that trine path,  
Which from my hand imbibed a father's blood,  
Ah do ye still remember the foul deeds

I wrought in your deep shade? then, here arriving,  
What added guilt incurred? Thou fatal marriage,  
Alas, most fatal, whence I drew my birth,

Whence sprung again a vile promiscuous brood,  
Exposed to light, of fathers, brothers, sons;—  
Whence too of kindred blood came sisters, wives,  
And mothers—all that man accounts most guilty!

Yet, since to speak is evil, where to act  
Was most unseemly, hide me, by the Gods,  
Far from this land, or doom my instant death,  
Or cast me to the deep—I reck not where—  
So I may never blast your sight again.

Come, nor disdain to touch a hapless wretch ;—  
Comply, and fear not : these unequalled woes  
I, I alone, of all mankind, must bear.

*Ch.* He comes, to whom thy prayers were best  
preferred,

Creon—to counsel and to act are his,  
Who now is left sole monarch of the land.

*Œd.* Ah me ! and in what words shall I accost  
him ?

How can he yield due credence to my prayer,  
Who hath himself already proved me worthless ?

*Enter CREON.*

CREON, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

*Cr.* I come not to insult thee, Œdipus,  
Or add recrimination to thy sorrows.  
But you, if nought of reverence ye retain  
For those of mortal birth, at least respect  
The all-sustaining flame of yon fair sun,  
Nor drag the dire pollution into light,  
Which nor the earth, nor heaven-descending rain,  
Nor day's broad light can evermore endure.  
Haste, and immure him instantly within,

For decency demands that kindred ears  
Alone should listen to a kinsman's woes.

*Œd.* Now by the Gods, since thou hast passed  
my hopes,  
And, best thyself of men, dost freely come  
To me the most abandoned, grant *one* boon—  
Not for myself, but thee, I ask.—

*Cr.* What boon  
Would'st thou of me so fervently implore?

*Œd.* Drive me from Thebes afar, where never  
more  
May I e'er hold communion with mankind.

*Cr.* This had I done, be well assured, but first  
'Tis meet to ask the pleasure of the God.

*Œd.* That pleasure hath already been declared;  
He dooms the impious parricide to death.

*Cr.* Thus hath he willed; yet in so dark a crisis  
'Tis better far again to ask his pleasure.

*Œd.* Wilt thou consult him for a wretch like me?

*Cr.* Thy fall hath taught us to revere his truth.

*Œd.* I charge and will adjure thee to entomb  
With decent rites the dead who lies within—  
Such office best beseems thy kindred blood.  
Nor longer let my native city deign  
To grant me refuge in her friendly walls;

But drive me hence, to dwell on that wild mount,  
My own Cithæron called, which erst my parents,  
While yet I lived, designed my sepulchre;—  
As they my death ordained, so let me die.  
Too well I know, nor blight of keen disease,  
Nor other ill could slay me. I was snatched  
From death, to dare this more than deadly deed.  
But as our fate began, so let us on.—  
As for my children—for my sons, O Creon,  
Take no solicitude—for they are men—  
Where'er they roam, they cannot feel the pangs  
Of piercing penury.—But, O! my daughters!—  
My much loved daughters!—in the weak estate  
Of virgin helplessness—who never dwelt  
Apart from their loved father, and with whom  
I ever shared my pomp—my joy—my all,—  
Be these thy constant care, and grant me now  
To clasp them, and bewail our common woes.  
Assent, O King!—  
O generous Monarch, while my hand may touch them,  
I seem to hold, as though I saw them still.  
What do I say?—  
Ye Gods! my much loved children do I hear,  
Wailing our woes?—hath pitying Creon sent  
The dearest pledges of my love to bless me?

Are my words true?

*Cr.* They are. My care provided this delight,  
Assured of old what joy their presence gave thee.

*Œd.* O be thou blest for this, and mayst thou find  
The God a better guard than I have found him.  
Where are ye, my sweet children? Come, O come,  
To mine embrace, as to a brother's hands,  
Which yet have quenched a father's eyes in darkness.  
*Your* father, my poor children, (though unseen,  
Unknown the deed,) by *her* who gave me life.  
O'er you I weep—though never more, alas!  
Can I behold you,—yet I know too well  
That ye must linger on through life in sorrow,  
While bitterest anguish waits you with mankind.  
To what assembled crowds will ye resort,  
What festive scenes, from which with downcast looks  
Ye will not steal dejected to your home,  
Yourselves more wept than that ideal woe?  
And when in Beauty's vernal pride ye bloom,  
Ah who, my daughters, who in nuptial tie  
Will lead you to his house, nor heed the stain  
Fixed on my wretched parents, and on yours?  
What taint is wanting? First, your father slew  
His father; then, in guilty wedlock linked  
To his own mother, gave you birth, my children,



From the same source whence his own life he drew.  
Thus will ye be reproached. Who then will wed  
you?

None, none, my daughters—ye must pine, alas!  
Deserted, and with nuptial rites unblessed.  
Son of Menceceus, since thou now art left  
Sole parent to these orphans, (we, who once  
Bore that beloved name, in ruin whelmed,)  
Ah leave them not, for they are still thy kindred,  
To roam in friendless penury, unwedded ;—  
Let not their misery equal their lost father's.  
Ah pity them, so young, so innocent,  
By every friend deserted, save by thee.  
Assent, most noble Monarch, pledge thy hand.  
And ye, my children, were your age mature  
To heed instruction, much would I exhort you.—  
Now would I breathe alone this parting prayer,  
Where'er your destined home, may Heaven assign  
A happier lot than your most wretched father's.

## TROCHAICS.

*Cr.* Hold, for where doth grief transport thee?  
to the palace now retreat.

*Œd.* I obey, though most reluctant.

*Cr.* All is well in season meet.

*Œd.* Knowst thou now my wish?

*Cr.* Unfold it—I due audience will accord.

*Œd.* Drive me from this land to exile.

*Cr.* To the God this prayer be poured.

*Œd.* To the Gods I am most hateful.

*Cr.* Thence thy wish thou soon shalt gain.

*Œd.* Meanst thou thus?

*Cr.* The word I mean not, but to speak  
I would disdain.

*Œd.* Lead me hence without delaying.

*Cr.* Go—but leave thy children still.

*Œd.* Do not, do not tear them from me.

*Cr.* Aim not to achieve thy will,

What before thou didst accomplish, failed to bless  
thy waning day.

*Ch.* Sons of Thebes, my native city, this great  
Œdipus survey,

Who resolved the famed enigma, who for virtue far  
renowned,

Nought of favour recked or fortune, with transcen-  
dant glory crowned.

Mark him now, dismayed, degraded, tost on waves  
of wildest woes;—

Think on this, short-sighted mortal, and till life's  
deciding close,

Dare not to pronounce thy fellow truly happy, truly  
blest,  
Till the bounds of life passed over, yet unharmed,  
he sinks to rest.

# ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS.



## ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS.

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THAT sublime sentiment of Sophocles, respecting  
“ Laws,” which occurs in the preceding tragedy,

*Μίγας ἔν τέτοις Θεός, ὑδὲ γηράσκει,*

“ The Divinity is mighty within them, and waxes not old,”

may be applied, with the strictest propriety, to his own admirable genius, as displayed in the plan and execution of the drama now under consideration. The “ Œdipus at Colonos ” is indeed a phenomenon without rival or parallel in the records of literature. Though composed, if we admit the testimony of Cicero and Valerius Maximus, after the poet had completed his ninetieth year ;—at an

age, when, in ordinary instances, as the corporeal powers of man become only “labour and sorrow,” so his mental energies are merged in imbecility and forgetfulness; this tragedy is inferior to none of our author’s productions in animation and interest, while for unaffected pathos and impressive morality it is superior to all. It constitutes a most satisfactory and appropriate sequel to the “Œdipus Tyrannus,” inasmuch as it supplies that *moral* effect, in which its precursor is unquestionably deficient. To behold an individual, like Œdipus, suffering on account of crimes into which he had been unconsciously betrayed by the very means which he had taken to avoid them, is a painful, if not an unnatural spectacle; and we derive little or no instruction from the calamities of one, who is punished rather from the caprice of the Gods, than for actual and deliberate transgression. But when we contemplate the same individual, as in the succeeding drama, enduring with patient resignation the unmerited anger of the Deities, and looking only to a future state of existence for deliverance and repose, we are admonished in the most forcible manner, that, as it is the first duty of man to avoid the perpetration of crime, so the most accep-

table expiation of guilt, is a meek and unrepining submission to its penalty.

It may also be added, that if, according to the trite proverb, example be the most impressive and useful mode of instruction, then is this drama more than commonly instructive. For the characters which it delineates are of universal occurrence. If there are few monarchs, on whom it can devolve to imitate the dignified magnanimity of Theseus, there are many sufferers, who may practise the resignation of Œdipus, and many daughters, who may emulate the piety of Antigone. In reference to the last-mentioned character, indeed, we may unhesitatingly affirm, that in no one uninspired composition is there presented a more natural and affecting delineation of filial virtue, than is here depicted in the daughter of Œdipus.

But though the softer emotions—love, and tenderness, and pity—are the predominant characteristics of this tragedy, the poet, in his management of the catastrophe, has soared to the loftiest elevation of grandeur and sublimity. As the life of Œdipus had been extraordinary and eventful,



so was his death to be awful and mysterious. He had not lived, neither could he die, like an ordinary mortal. He bore a "charmed life;" a life exempted, as it were, from the common assaults of mortality, and only to be terminated by some signal and unprecedented interposition of Divinity. Such is indeed the "*dignus vindice nodus*," which sanctions supernatural interference. Accordingly, the earth convulsed and trembling, the appalling and incessant thunder, the glare of lightning, and the howling of the storm, the solemn intervals of silence, in which the voice of some invisible messenger is heard to murmur from beneath a summons to the devoted monarch, the consternation even of the resolute and intrepid Theseus, all these tend to produce a scene, which, for loftiness of conception and magnificence of execution, is not excelled by any relic of the Grecian drama, even in the compositions of the wild and terrific Æschylus.

This drama is also peculiarly valuable, on account of the light which it throws upon the religious observances of antiquity, of which the expiatory homage of Œdipus in the grove of the Fu-

ries is a conspicuous instance. Should the English reader consider these descriptions somewhat too tedious and circumstantial, he may perhaps be conciliated by the reflection, that the ancient drama,—how unlike the modern!—was the popular vehicle of religious as well as moral instruction. He will at least be recompensed for the labour of perusal, if the contemplation of the rigid devotion with which the heathen performed the services of *their* religion, should furnish him with an additional motive for the more zealous and conscientious fulfilment of the duties of his *own*.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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**ŒDIPUS.**

**ANTIGONE,** } **DAUGHTERS OF ŒDIPUS.**  
**ISMENE,** }

**THESEUS, KING OF ATHENS.**

**CREON.**

**POLYNICES, SON OF ŒDIPUS.**

**ATHENIAN.**

**MESSENGER.**

**CHORUS OF AGED INHABITANTS OF COLONOS.**

# ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS.

---

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

*Œd.* Say, daughter of a blind and aged sire,  
Antigone, what region have we reached,  
Or whose the city? Who will here extend  
A scanty pittance for the passing day  
To the poor wandering Œdipus, who asks  
But for a little, and receiving less  
Ev'n than that little, counts the boon enough.  
For stern afflictions, long-protracted years,  
And fortitude of soul, have taught me patience.  
But now, my child, if haply thou discern  
One resting on unconsecrated seats,

Or by the hallowed groves, there rest my steps,  
And seat me there, that thus we may inquire  
What land hath given us refuge? Strangers here  
We seek the natives of the state, to learn,  
And what we hear, perform.

*Ant.* O Œdipus,  
My much-afflicted father, the high towers,  
Which girt the city, rise in distant view :  
The spot on which we stand, I deem, is holy.  
Here laurels, olives, vines, in one green shade  
Are close inwoven ; and within the grove  
The nightingales make frequent melody.  
Rest now thy faltering limbs on this rude stone ;  
Such lengthened wanderings ill befit thine age.

*Œd.* Then seat me here, and watch beside the  
blind.

*Ant.* That mournful office time too well hath  
taught me.

*Œd.* Canst thou then tell me on what place we stand ?

*Ant.* The land is that of Athens ; but the spot  
I know not ; this each passing traveller  
Hath told already. Wilt thou I depart  
To question of the place ?

*Œd.* Yea, if there be  
Inhabitants, my daughter, to inform thee.

*Ant.* There are inhabitants ; but now my task  
Is needless, for I see a stranger near us.

*Œd.* And with quick pace is he advancing hither?

*Ant.* The man e'en now hath reached us ; what  
thou wilt

Demand ;—for he is present to inform thee.

*Enter an ATHENIAN.*

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ATHENIAN.

*Œd.* Stranger, apprised by her, whose sight alone  
Guides both herself and me, that thou art here  
Arrived in welcome moment to unfold  
What much we long to know—

*Ath.* Ere thou dost urge  
Inquiry further, quit that sacred seat ;  
No foot of man may tread this hallowed soil.

*Œd.* What is the place,—devoted to what Power?

*Ath.* From mortal touch and mortal dwelling pure  
Is that mysterious grove ; 'the awful Powers,

<sup>1</sup> Ἐμφοῖβοι Θεαί, the venerable Goddesses, or Furies ; by name, Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megæra. They were also

Daughters of Earth and Darkness, dwell within.

*Œd.* By what most holy name should I invoke them?

*Ath.* We call them in this land th' Eumenides,  
The all-beholding Powers; in other lands,  
By various lofty titles men adore them.

*Œd.* Propitious now may they receive their suppliant,  
That never may I quit their fated seat.

*Ath.* What may this mean?

*Œd.* A symbol of my doom.

*Ath.* 'Twere bold in me to force thee from the spot,

Ere thus the mandate of the state enjoin.

*Œd.* O stranger, by the Gods, disdain thou not  
To answer all a wretched wanderer asks thee.

*Ath.* Speak; and from me thou shalt not meet  
disdain.

*Œd.* What is the region, then, which now receives us?

---

styled the Eumenides, or "Benevolent." The reader, who is curious to learn in what manner they acquired an appellation so incongruous with the offices usually ascribed to them, may consult the "Eumenides" of Æschylus.

*Ath.* Far as I know, thou too shalt hear the whole.  
 The place is holy all. Here reigns supreme  
 The mighty Neptune; here the Power of Flame,<sup>2</sup>  
 The Titan-God, Prometheus; where thy feet  
 Are resting now, is called the brazen way,  
 The bulwark of great Athens; while the fields  
 Adjacent claim for their illustrious Lord  
 Colonus the equestrian, and from him  
 The circling regions all deduce their name.  
 Such are the things I tell thee; not alone  
 By words ennobled, but familiar use.

*Œd.* Do any dwell around this hallowed spot?

*Ath.* Yes, they who from the God their name derive.

*Œd.* <sup>3</sup>Is there a king, or bear the people sway?

*Ath.* The King who rules the city rules here also.

<sup>2</sup> Πυρφόρος Θεός. This appellation is peculiarly applicable to Prometheus; because, as we are told by Pausanias, the youths, who contended in the race, called ἀγὼν λαμπαδύχες, lighted their torches at his altar here mentioned, and ran towards the city.—Potter.

<sup>3</sup> It may seem surprising, that Œdipus, who had so long been Monarch of Thebes, should not know whether a neighbouring state was a republic or a monarchy; but it will afterwards appear, that Œdipus only asks this question for a feint, that he may not be known, and in order to gain fuller intelligence.—Brumoy.



*Œd.* Stands his high throne in equity and might?

*Ath.* His name may answer this. 'Tis Theseus, son  
Of Ægeus, late our Lord.

*Œd.* Is there of you  
One who will bear our message to his ear?

*Ath.* Aught to recount, or ask his presence hither?

*Œd.* That for a trivial succour he may reap  
A rich reward.

*Ath.* Reward! and what reward  
Can a blind wanderer on a king confer?

*Œd.* The things we would reveal are not less clear  
Than if our sight had traced them.

*Ath.* Know'st thou, stranger,  
That thou art not deceived? and yet thou seem'st  
In all, except thy fortunes, truly noble.  
Remain where now I see thee, till I seek  
Those who inhabit the encircling meads,  
Not the far city, and relate my tale.  
Be it their task to judge, if in this grove  
Thou mayst remain, or must again depart.

[*Erit* ATHENIAN.]

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

*Œd.* My daughter, is the stranger now departed?

*Ant.* He is, my father; all around is still.

Speak what thou list, for I alone am nigh thee.

*Œd.* Dread Powers of fearful aspect, since *your*  
seats

Have lent my wearied limbs their first repose,

Be not relentless or to me or Phœbus,

Who, when his voice my countless woes denounced,

Foretold a welcome though a distant end,

When I should reach the destined realm—where find

A rest and refuge in the sheltering grove

Of venerable Powers—that there my course

Of sorrow and of agony should close;

With rich reward to those who should receive me,

To those, who thrust me from their land, destruction;

And that undoubted signals should proclaim

The hour ordained by fate—or earthquake's roar,

Thunders, or lightnings of Almighty Jove.

Hence well I know 'twas your own augury,

That to this hallowed grove my wanderings led.

I had not else thus lighted first on you,

\*The wine-abhorring, pure myself from wine,  
 And on this rude yet awful seat reclined.  
 Now, gracious Powers, Apollo's word confirm,  
 And grant at length a limit to my woes,  
 If I have felt enough of wretchedness,—  
 The slave of miseries far beyond the lot  
 To man's sad race assigned. Come, then, O come,  
 Propitious daughters of primeval Night;  
 And thou, from thine own patron Pallas named,  
 Fair Athens, noblest of our Grecian states;  
 Pity the shade of wretched Œdipus;  
 Alas! I am not now what I have been.

*Ant.* Cease, cease. I see some aged men advance,  
 Perchance with purpose to explore thy seat.

*Œd.* I will forbear. Conduct me from the path,  
 And screen me in the grove, that I may learn  
 Their secret conference. Knowledge thus obtained  
 May best direct us how to act with prudence.

[*Exeunt* ŒDIPUS and ANTIGONE.]

\* 'Ασίβους. Wine was never used in the sacrifices offered to the Furies. Hence the Chorus, in enjoining Œdipus to propitiate the Goddesses, expressly command him, μηδὲ προσφέρειν μίθρ, not to present wine.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE.

Look ! look ! who was he ? where abides he now ?  
 Or whither from the spot hath fled,  
 ' Restless, most restless of mankind ?  
 Dost thou behold him ? Search around,  
 And shout on every side.  
 Who—who is this sad aged wanderer ?  
 Doubtless of foreign land, or his rash foot  
 Had never trod the grove  
 Of those unconquered Virgin-Powers,  
 Whose name we tremble but to breathe,  
 Whose mystic shrine we pass  
 With far-averted eye,  
 And pondering, silent and devout,  
 On happier omens there.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Ανοήσματος. Literally, according to Brunck's interpretation, most insatiable. The translator confesses himself at a loss to comprehend the full meaning of this epithet; he has therefore adopted the rendering of Potter, "most restless," in preference to that of Francklin, who has "most prophane."

But rumour tells that one hath now arrived,  
 Revering not the laws,  
 Whom I have sought with keen observant glance  
 Throughout the sacred grove,  
 Yet still he mocks my search.

*Enter ŒDIPUS and ANTIGONE.*

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

*Œd.* Behold' him here ; for by your words I know  
 I am the man ye seek.

*Ch.* Ah me ! to hear and to behold how fearful !

*Œd.* O deem me not a <sup>6</sup>scorner of your laws.

*Ch.* Protector Jove, who is this aged man ?

*Œd.* One on whose lot no favouring Power hath  
 smiled

Ye rulers of the land !

<sup>6</sup> "Ἀνόμιος. The term "outlaw," which Francklin has selected as peculiarly appropriate, does not appear to give the precise signification of the original word. It refers not so much to one "whom the laws of his country have expelled from all the benefits and privileges of society," as to one who does not recognise or regard the sanction of the laws. It would, perhaps, be more appropriately rendered by the word "lawless."

Be this the proof,—I had not wandered else,  
Led by another's eye,  
Or leaned, though weighty, on so frail a stay.

ANTISTROPHE.

*Ch.* Woe! woe! unhappy! thou, it seems, art  
doomed

To pine with sightless orbs, oppressed  
By years, and bowed with wretchedness.  
Yet, if my power avail, to woe  
Thou shalt not add *this* curse ;  
For thou hast passed, far passed, the bound assigned.  
Ah ! tread not thou that green and hallowed grove,  
Where with the honied draught  
Commingling, its pure limpid stream  
The full and flowing goblet pours.  
This, hapless stranger, this  
With cautious step beware.  
Recede—depart—a lengthened space  
Remains between us still.  
Dost thou not hear, unhappy wanderer?  
If thou hast aught to ask  
In conference, quit that sacred spot,  
And where the laws allow  
Demand ; till then refrain.

*Œd.* What, O my daughter! should we now resolve?

*Ant.* Father, we must obey the citizens,  
And yield, as fits our state, without reluctance.

*Œd.* Sustain me then.

*Ant.* My hand e'en now sustains thee.

*Œd.* O strangers, wrong me not,  
Since, yielding now, I quit the sacred seat.

*Ch.* Nay, from that very seat, old man,  
Know, none shall force thee.

*Œd.* Should I yet advance?

*Ch.* Yea, forward.

*Œd.* Forward still?

*Ch.* Maiden, do thou his footsteps onward guide.  
Thou seest the bound prescribed.

*Ant.* Follow me then, with dark and faltering step;  
Follow, my father, whither now I lead thee.

A stranger in a foreign land,

O thou of many woes!

Whate'er the state abhors

Endure to hate, and what it wills, revere.

*Œd.* Then lead me, O my child, where guiltless all  
We may securely speak,

And unoffending hear,

Nor strive we more with stern necessity.

*Ch.* Stop ! nor beyond the rocky pavement aught  
Thy venturous foot advance.

*Œd.* Thus far ?

*Ch.* Enough ; thou hear'st—enough !

*Œd.* May I now sit ?

*Ch.* On the crag's sloping verge  
Cautious with reverent awe thy form incline.

*Ant.* Father, 'tis mine, in silent tenderness,  
Alas ! how sad a task !  
To guide thy dark and dubious steps.  
On my beloved hand  
Rest thy weak powerless frame.

*Œd.* O doom of abject misery !

*Ch.* Since thou hast now obeyed, ill-fated man,  
Disclose who gave thee birth,  
What mighty woe constrains thee thus to roam,  
And where thy country ?—

*Œd.* Strangers, I have no country—Ask no more.

*Ch.* Why thus evade, old man ?

*Œd.* Ask not, I pray thee, ask not of my race,  
Nor question aught beyond.

*Ch.* Ha ! what means this ?

*Œd.* Dire is my race.

*Ch.* Yet speak.

*Œd.* Ah me, my daughter, how can I reply ?



*Ch.* Say of what line thou cam'st,  
Who, stranger, was thy sire?

*Œd.* What shall I do, my daughter? Woe is me!

*Ant.* Speak; since the hand of fate lies heavy  
on thee.

*Œd.* Then will I speak; concealment 'vails not now.

*Ch.* Thou tarriest long; but speed—at once reply.

*Œd.* Know ye a certain child of Laius?

*Ch.* Ha!

*Œd.* Sprung from the race of Labdacus?

*Ch.* Great Jove!

*Œd.* The hapless Œdipus?—

*Ch.* Art thou that wretch?

*Œd.* Oh, start not thus appalled. I am, I am.

*Ch.* Alas!

*Œd.* I am most wretched.

*Ch.* Gracious Heaven!

*Œd.* What darker doom, my daughter, now  
impends?

*Ch.* Away, away, and quit my land for ever.

*Œd.* What thou hast promised how wilt thou fulfil?

*Ch.* Nay, Heaven's avenging justice smites not him  
Who wreaks but wrong for wrong;  
And fraud repaid with fraud,  
On the false wretch, who first deceived,

Brings sorrow, not success.

Thou from these seats, once more  
An outcast, speed thee—speed thee from the land,  
Lest thine unhalloved presence blast the city.

*Ant.* O venerable strangers, though ye shrunk  
Recoiling from the tale  
Of my poor aged sire,  
Speaking of dark involuntary deeds ;  
I do conjure you, turn not thus from me,  
Me, while in suppliant anguish, I implore  
Compassion for a father, and regard  
Your steadfast gaze with unaverted eye.  
Ah ! deem me now as one  
Of your own kindred, and let pity wake  
To aid the lost. On you, as on the Gods,  
Our hopes depend. Oh ! then relent, and grant  
This unexpected boon.  
I here adjure you by each hallowed tie,  
Your child, your wife, your duty, and your God.  
Where will ye find the man who can escape,  
When Fate's stern hand constrains him to despair ?

*Ch.* Know, child of Œdipus, we pity thee,  
Nor gaze relentless on thy woe-worn sire ;  
But we revere the Gods, nor dare rescind  
The firm decision of our former mandate.

*Œd.* What then doth Glory's vaunted name avail,  
What the fair honours of illustrious fame,  
Unproved by deeds as noble? Rumour boasts  
Of Athens, most observant of the Gods,  
Athens alone, of all our states, the first  
To save the stranger, and the lost to aid.  
What are those vaunts to me? Ye from those seats  
Allured, and now expel me from your land,  
Awed by a name alone. It is not me,  
Nor yet my deeds ye fear; for in those deeds  
I have but suffered—not inflicted—wrong,  
If I may dare my wretched parents name,  
For whom ye thus condemn me. This I know  
Full well. And shall I then be foully branded  
Base e'en by nature, when my sole offence  
Is—to have borne injustice, and revenged it?  
Nay, had I e'en been conscious of the crime,  
I were not thus abandoned. But I went,  
Oh how unconscious of the path I trod!  
But much have I endured from those who knew  
The fearful wreck they wrought. By the great Gods,  
I now adjure you, strangers, at your will  
Hither removed, O save me, save me here,  
Nor, while ye think to venerate your Gods,  
Condemn their holiest laws. Know, while they gaze

Approving on the righteous, they behold  
 The impious too, and guilt shall never win  
 Escape or shelter from the wrath of Heaven.  
 O then forbear to dim the radiant fame  
 Of generous Athens, leaguings with the lawless ;  
 But as, relying on thy plighted faith,  
 Thou hast received me, save and shield me still,  
 Nor spurn with cold contempt this abject frame,  
 Thus worn and wasted by consuming woes.  
 Sacred I come, and pious, charged alone  
 With blessings to your state ; and when your King,  
 Whoe'er he be, is present to my tale,  
 I will inform thee all ;—till he arrive  
 Insult me not.

*Ch.* Thine arguments, old man,  
 Are urged by weighty reasonings, and constrain me  
 Much to revere thee. Things of import high  
 Thy words involve. Be it enough for me  
 To wait the wise decision of our monarch.

*Œd.* Where, strangers, doth your monarch hold  
 his court ?

*Ch.* In his ancestral city ; and the man  
 Who saw thee first, and bade my presence here,  
 Passed with like tidings to the monarch charged.

*Œd.* Will he then deem me worthy of regard,

And deign his audience to a blind old man?

*Ch.* Doubtless, when he shall hear thy name.

*Œd.* And who

Will be the bearer of a word like this?

*Ch.* 'Long have thy wanderings been, and travellers soon  
vellers soon

Diffuse their tales afar; these he will hear,

And, be assured, will come. Widely, old man,

Thy fame is blazoned; though his step were slow,

Thy name would urge him to redoubling speed.

*Œd.* O! be his coming prosperous to his state,  
Prosperous to me. What man of virtuous deeds  
Befriendeth not himself?

*Ant.* Almighty Jove!

What shall I say, and whither lead my thoughts?

*Œd.* What mean'st thou, my Antigone?

*Ant.* I see

A woman, on a fleet Sicilian steed,

Advancing hither; from the sun's full beams

A close Thessalian bonnet shades her brow.

<sup>7</sup> Μακρὰ κίλυθος. Potter interprets these words to signify, that Œdipus had advanced far into the Athenian territories. Certainly they cannot refer to the distance between Colonos and Athens, which did not exceed ten stadia.

What shall I say ? Oh ! is it she indeed,  
Or do my fond imaginings deceive me ?  
Again I doubt and am assured by turns,  
Uncertain what to think.—My doubts are o'er ;  
I know her now ; that sweet and welcome smile  
Hath scattered all misgivings, and I see  
'Tis she, my dear, my ever-loved Ismene.

*Œd.* What hast thou said, my daughter ?

*Ant.* That I see

Thy child, my father, my dear sister too ;  
A moment—and her accents will assure thee.

*Enter ISMENE.*

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

*Is.* O ye, the names most treasured in my heart,  
My father and my sister, though in pain  
I traced your wanderings, now a keener grief  
Dims my sad eye while gazing on your sorrows.

*Œd.* And art thou here, my child ?

*Is.* Unhappy father !

*Œd.* Sprung from my blood—

*Is.* To share thy miseries !

*Œd.* And art thou come?

*Is.* Not without desperate peril.

*Œd.* Embrace me, dearest child.

*Is.* In one fond clasp

I thus embrace you both.

*Œd.* Her, too, and me.

*Is.* Myself the third in sorrow.

*Œd.* O my child,

What brought thee hither?

*Is.* Anxious thought for thee.

*Œd.* Concern for *me*!

*Is.* Yea, fraught with weighty tidings,

And unattended, save by this true slave,

Alone of all yet faithful.

*Œd.* Where are now

Thy brothers, nerved by youth for martial toils?

*Is.* They are, where Fate constrains, in darkest  
peril!

*Œd.* How have they bowed their manners and  
their mind

To the base customs of inglorious Egypt!

Where men, immured at home, direct the loom,

While in the field their women still procure

The sustenance of life. Thus too of you,

My children, those whom best such toil behoved

Like timid maids, rest idly in their home ;  
While ye, my daughters, in their stead partake  
A wretched father's sorrows. She, indeed,

[*To ANTIGONE.*

Since feebler childhood passed, and blooming youth  
Breathed vigour through her frame, still on my path  
Attendant, ever wanders where I roam,  
Guides my weak steps, and oft through pathless wilds  
Strays with unsandalled foot, bereft of food,  
Endures the frequent showers and sultry sun,  
Nor heeds the splendours of a kingly board,  
So her fond care may tend a father's need.

Thou too, Ismene, oft unknown to Thebes  
Hast left thy home, to tell thy wandering sire  
The oracles relating to his doom ;  
And when they thrust me from my native land,  
Didst thou stand forth, my firm and faithful guide.  
And now, beloved daughter, to thy sire  
What errand dost thou bear ? what weighty cause  
Moved thee to quit thy home ? Thou dost not come,  
Full well I know, with serious charge unfraught,  
And much I fear lest new alarms impend.

*Is.* I will not tell thee, father, all the toils,  
The ills I bore in seeking thine abode ;



These now are vanquished,—and 'twere worse than  
vain

Once more to waken, by recounting, woes.  
My errand here was to relate the ills  
In which thy hapless sons are now immersed.  
It seemed at first their only wish to yield  
The throne to Creon, nor pollute the state,  
Weighing the curse entailed on all their race,  
Which plunged in ruin thy devoted house.  
Now by some God, or frenzy of the mind,  
Unhappy pair! perverted, mutual strife  
Fires them to rancour, struggling for the throne.  
Reckless of natural rights, the younger spurns  
His elder, Polynices, and expels him  
Both from his rightful throne and father-land.  
He, as the voice of Rumour widely tells,  
Fled to the vales of Argos, and contracts  
A new alliance; arms his martial friends;  
And vaunts that Argos shall requite his wrongs  
On guilty Thebes, and raise his name to heaven.  
No vague and vain reports are these, my father,  
But facts too surely proved. But when the Gods  
Will look in mercy on thy lengthened woes,  
Alas! I cannot learn.

*Œd.* Hast thou then hope,  
That Heaven will yet regard, and save me still?

*Is.* I have, my father; for I firmly trust  
The recent voice oracular.

*Œd.* What voice?  
What, daughter, hath it presaged?

*Is.* That an hour  
Will come when Thebes shall seek thee, living still,  
Or dead, for her deliverance.

*Œd.* Who can look  
For prosperous fortune to a wretch like me?

*Is.* The oracles proclaim *thou* art their might.

*Œd.* I deemed that I was nothing; am I then  
Once more a man?

*Is.* The Gods exalt thee now;  
Before—they willed thy downfall.

*Œd.* What avails it  
To raise in age the wretch whose youth they blasted?

*Is.* Know, for this cause will Creon quickly come.

*Œd.* With what intent, my daughter? tell me all.

*Is.* That near the Theban confines they may hold  
thee,  
Though ne'er allowed to pass the sacred bound.

*Œd.* What can one prostrate at their gate avail  
them?

*Is.* Thy tomb, if reared in other lands, to them  
Would prove most fatal.

*Œd.* Though the God withheld  
His certain presage, this were promptly learnt.

*Is.* And therefore seek the Thebans to confine thee  
Near their own realms, not thine own master there.

*Œd.* Would they inter me too in Theban ground?

*Is.* This must not be; the kindred blood forbids.

*Œd.* Then never, never, shall they work their will.

*Is.* An hour must come when Thebes shall rue  
thy vengeance.

*Œd.* What strange event, my child, shall work  
this marvel?

*Is.* Thy quenchless wrath, when round thy tomb  
they stand.

*Œd.* From whom didst thou these oracles receive?

*Is.* From those who late returned from Delphi's  
shrine.

*Œd.* Hath then Apollo thus foretold of me?

*Is.* So those declared, who came but now to Thebes.

*Œd.* Which of my shameless sons heard aught  
of this?

*Is.* Each heard alike, and both must know it well.

*Œd.* Yet those degenerate wretches, warned of this,  
Could grasp at empire, and neglect a father.

*Is.* I grieve to hear such tidings,—yet I bear them.

*Œd.* Ne'er may the Gods extinguish the fierce flames

Of this dread fatal strife ; but to my will  
Award the issue of that deadly feud,  
Which now with equal weapons they prepare :  
So should the proud usurper vaunt no more  
His sceptre and his throne, nor e'er to Thebes  
Should he, who left his native towers, return.  
They, they at least, nor succoured nor retained  
Their wretched father, from his country spurned  
With foul dishonour ; but assenting joined  
In the stern edict which proclaimed me exile.  
Thou wilt reply, to mine own earnest prayer  
The state that melancholy boon assigned :  
But 'tis not thus ;—on that disastrous day,  
When frenzy fired my soul, and all I asked  
Was but to die, and hide my shame for ever,  
Crushed by o'erwhelming rocks ;—no friendly hand  
Was stretched to rid me of the life I hated ;  
But when the lenient hand of time had soothed  
Despair to resignation, and I learned  
That mine own desperate frenzy had inflicted  
A wound more piercing than the crime deserved ;

Then, then, the city thrust me sternly forth  
To most reluctant exile ; and these sons,  
My noble offspring, who had power to aid  
Their father in his need, that power withheld,  
Deigned not to raise a word in my defence ;  
But drove me out a poor unfriended outcast.  
While by these virgins, far as their weak sex  
Avails to aid me, all hath been supplied,—  
Meet sustenance, serene though lowly rest,  
And all the tender cares of duteous love ;  
<sup>8</sup> While my base sons with impious ardour grasp  
Crowns, sceptres, kingdoms, and forget a father.  
But never shall they gain support from me,  
Nor shall they flourish on the throne of Thebes  
In glad and prosperous grandeur ; this I know,  
Hearing these oracles, and pondering well  
The sure response by Phœbus breathed of old.  
And let them send their Creon, or some chief  
As potent and as base, to seek me here ;

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<sup>8</sup> In extenuation of the rancorous malediction of Œdipus, it should be observed, that the godlike doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries obtained no place in the heathen systems of morality, where revenge was accounted natural, or even laudable.

If ye, O strangers, with these awful Powers,  
Your tutelary Gods, will here stand forth  
To grant me succour, much will ye promote  
Your country's welfare and my foes' despair.

*Ch.* Thou, Œdipus, and these thy daughters, claim  
Our warmest, liveliest pity; but since thou  
Hast pledged thyself my country's saviour, first  
Would I inform thee what involves thy good.

*Œd.* Speak, friend, to one who will in all obey thee.

*Ch.* Make due atonement to those awful Powers,  
Whose hallowed grove thy footsteps first have trod.

*Œd.* And with what rites? my friends, inform  
me all.

*Ch.* <sup>9</sup>First, from yon sacred ever-gushing stream,  
Drawn with pure hands, the due libations bring.

*Œd.* What follows, when th' unsullied stream is  
drawn?

*Ch.* Goblets are there, by nicest art enchased,  
Whose brim and double handles thou must crown—

*Œd.* With boughs, or slender threads? or with  
what rites?

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<sup>9</sup> This is the commencement of that scene alluded to in our introductory remarks, which so minutely develops the religious ceremonies of the ancients. The reader must endeavour to judge of it as it would appear to an Athenian audience, not as it appears to himself.

*Ch.* Wreathe round the soft wool of a new-shorn lamb.

*Œd.* 'Tis well; what next befits me to discharge?

*Ch.* Turn to the orient morn, and pour the stream—

*Œd.* From the same goblets thou hast just described?

*Ch.* Yea, pour libations trine; drain with the third  
The consecrated bowl.

*Œd.* Instruct me yet;  
What should the bowl contain?

*Ch.* The simple stream  
With honey tempered—wine be absent thence!

*Œd.* And when the soil's dark verdure drinks the  
stream?

*Ch.* With both thy hands place fresh-plucked  
olive-boughs,  
Thrice nine;—then invoke the Powers in prayer.

*Œd.* I joy to hear; for this is solemn all.

*Ch.* Since here we call them "Powers Benevolent,"  
That with propitious minds they may accept  
And aid the lowly suppliant, for thyself  
Implore their mercy, or in thy behalf

Another. Let thy prayers be brief, and breathed  
In low and whispered tone. Then from the spot  
Retire—and turn not back. These rites performed,  
I shall stand forth undaunted at thy side;

If not, old man, I can but tremble for thee.

*Œd.* Hear ye the natives of this land, my daughters?

*Ant.* We hear—what should be done do thou command.

*Œd.* These rites *I* cannot now discharge, debarred  
By twofold ills—infirmity and blindness.  
Of you, my daughters, one the homage pay.  
I deem *one* soul, with pious feeling fraught,  
Meet as a thousand for a task like this.  
Then be the hallowed rites discharged with speed.  
Yet leave me not alone; these faltering limbs  
Refuse to bear me onward unsustained,  
Nor dare I move without a watchful guide.

*Is.* The task enjoined be mine; but tell me first  
Where is the spot—where all the rite demands?

*Ch.* Far in the grove retired. There one resides,  
O virgin, to provide whate'er thou need.

*Is.* For this I now depart. My sister, thou  
Remain to watch our father; toil is light,  
When we but labour in a parent's cause.

[*Exit* ISMENE.]

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

*Ch.* Stranger, 'tis painful to awake



Griefs that have long and calmly slept,  
Yet do I long to ask—

*Œd.* Ah! what?

*Ch.* Whence this interminable woe,  
That rankles in thy breast?

*Œd.* By all the reverence which a guest may claim,  
Explore it not. Foul deeds have I endured.

*Ch.* Wide hath the rumour spread, nor yet hath  
ceased,  
And I would learn the truth.

*Œd.* Ah me!

*Ch.* Assent, I pray thee.

*Œd.* Woe is me!

*Ch.* Yield, for I too will grant whate'er thou ask.

*Œd.* Strangers, dire evils have I borne,  
Borne how reluctantly, let Heaven attest!  
Involuntary all.

*Ch.* And from what cause?—

*Œd.* To an unhallowed couch  
The city linked me, guiltless of the crime.

*Ch.* And hast thou then profaned  
The kindred couch I tremble but to name?

*Œd.* 'Tis death to hear you, strangers;—but these two  
Sprung from my blood—

*Ch.* Ha! whence?

*Œd.* My daughters these, and pledges of my  
crime—

*Ch.* Almighty Jove !

*Œd.* Both born of her who gave  
Their father life—

*Ch.* Are these thy daughters then,  
Daughters at once and sisters of their sire ?—

*Œd.* Alas !

*Ch.* Yes ; thou dost well to weep.  
The woes thou hast endured are infinite.

*Œd.* And e'en oblivion's solace is denied me.

*Ch.* And thou hast done—

*Œd.* I have not *done*.

*Ch.* What then ?

*Œd.* A gift the state conferred, and I received,  
Wretch that I was ! oh had I ne'er deserved it !  
Thence all my woes.

*Ch.* How thus, unhappy man !—  
Didst thou not shed the blood ?—

*Œd.* Why this demand ? what dost thou seek to  
trace ?

*Ch.* A father's blood ?—

*Œd.* Alas !

Thy words revive the pangs that seemed to sleep.

*Ch.* Didst thou then slay ?—

*Œd.* I slew him, yet I had—

*Ch.* What?

*Œd.* A most righteous plea.

*Ch.* Speak it.

*Œd.* I will.

Since all unconscious on the crime I rushed,  
And struck the blow in ignorance, by the law  
I am absolved, unknowing what I did.

*Ch.* But lo! great Theseus, Ægeus' royal son,  
Hastes to the spot, excited by thy fame.

*Enter THESEUS.*

THESEUS, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

*Thes.* Long by the voice of general fame apprised  
Of thy sad tale, and that infuriate deed  
Which quenched thy visual orbs in utter gloom,  
I knew thee, son of Laius ; as I came,  
Much have I heard, and know thee now more surely.  
Thine abject garb and aspect of despair  
Too plainly speak thy fortunes. Hapless King,  
Thou wak'st my pity ; and I would but ask  
What boon thou seek'st from me or from my state,

Thou and the sad associate of thy sorrows.  
 Unfold thy wish ; and arduous were th' emprise  
 Where thou shouldst ask my utmost aid in vain.  
<sup>10</sup>I too was nurtured in a foreign land,  
 As thou art now ; an exile's woes to me,  
 An exile's perils, are familiar all.  
 Then never, never, from the stranger's prayer,  
 Who comes like thee, relentless will I turn,  
 Or needful aid withhold. I am a man,  
 As thou art ; and *my* power to rule th' events  
 To-morrow may bring forth transcends not thine.

*Œd.* Theseus ! in these brief words thy generous  
 soul

Hath shone conspicuous ; hence a brief reply  
 May well suffice me. Who I am, and who  
 My father, what my country, thou hast said.  
 Nought then remains, save to prefer my prayer  
 For all I need, and then our conference close.

*Thes.* Speak, then, at once, that I may know thy  
 wish.

*Œd.* I come to proffer thee this withered frame,

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<sup>10</sup> Theseus was educated in the court of Pittheus, King of Træzene.

A gift to sight unseemly ; yet endowed  
With costlier treasures than the loveliest form.

*Thes.* What rich requital dost thou bring me here?

*Œd.* This mayst thou learn in time—thou canst not  
now.

*Thes.* When shall thy proffered good approve its  
worth?

*Œd.* When I am dead, and thou hast reared my  
tomb.

*Thes.* The last and saddest boon of life is all  
Thy prayer regards. The care of all between  
Is unremembered, or contemned by thee.

*Œd.* In this one prayer are these concentrated all.

*Thes.* Yet light and trivial is the grace implored.

*Œd.* Mark me ! no trivial contest shall ensue.

*Thes.* Of me, or of thy children, dost thou pre-  
sage?

*Œd.* They would constrain me to return to Thebes.

*Thes.* If such their wish, it ill becomes thee thus  
To roam a willing exile.

*Œd.* When I sought  
Such refuge, they refused.

*Thes.* Oh, most unwise !

How vain is wrath in wretchedness like thine !

*Œd.* Forbear reproaches, till thou hear my plea.

*Thes.* Speak—I were wrong to judge thee un-informed.

*Œd.* O Theseus! I have suffered woes on woes Exhaustless heaped.

*Thes.* Dost thou by this intend  
The ancient ruin of thy fated house?

*Œd.* Ah no! in this the general voice of Greece  
Hath left me nought to tell thee.

*Thes.* Do thy griefs  
Transcend the common sufferings of our race?

*Œd.* They do, indeed. By mine own heartless sons  
To exile thrust, like some loathed parricide,  
Ne'er may I tread my native soil again.

*Thes.* Why, then, recall thee, if consigned to  
dwell  
For evermore apart?

*Œd.* The voice of Heaven  
Constrains them thus to act.

*Thes.* And of what ills  
Do these predictions wake the boding dread?

*Œd.* Discomfiture and death from this fair land.

*Thes.* Whence shall such fatal feud between us rise?

*Œd.* Most honoured son of Ægeus, the great Gods  
Alone the high prerogative may claim  
To shun the blight of age, the stroke of death;

All else must yield to Time's unconquered sway.  
The vigour of the earth, man's martial might,  
Are doomed alike to fade ; fair faith expires,  
And falsehood springs florescent. So in men  
By dearest ties united, and in states  
By firmest leagues to amity constrained,  
The same true soul remains not. What we now  
Delight to cherish, in the lapse of time,  
Or wakes abhorrence, or revives desire.  
Thus now, though all is peace with thee and Thebes,  
Thanks to thy generous faith, revolving time,  
Which in its ceaseless course gives constant birth  
To countless days and nights, shall yet produce  
The fated season, when for trivial wrongs,  
Your plighted concord shall dissolve in air :  
Then this cold body, in the sleep of death  
Entombed, shall drink their warm and vital blood,  
If Jove be mightiest still, and Jove-born Phœbus  
Retain his truth unbroken. But I pause—  
Let me not breathe what Heaven has veiled in  
darkness.

Guard thou thy proffered faith, nor shalt thou say  
In Œdipus thy hospitable land  
A vain and useless habitant received,  
Unless in this the Gods themselves deceive me.

*Ch.* Before, O King! to thee and to the state  
Such promises he proffered to fulfil.

*Thes.* Oh, who would spurn the warm benevolence  
Of one like him, to whom this altar first,  
Common to all, its friendly refuge lends?  
Then, though a suppliant to these Powers he came,  
To me and to my people doth repay  
No trivial recompense. Whom I, impressed  
With deepest reverence, never will repulse;  
But in my realms a safe asylum grant.  
If here it please the stranger to remain,  
To guard him be *your* charge. If thou prefer  
With me to quit the spot, O Œdipus,  
Choose which thou wilt, and my assent command.

*Œd.* Pour down thy richest blessings on such men,  
Almighty Jove!

*Thes.* What, then, dost thou resolve?  
Say, wilt thou to the palace?

*Œd.* Would to Heaven  
I might attend thee, but the spot is here—

*Thes.* Destined for what? I will in nought oppose  
thee.

*Œd.* Here shall I triumph o'er the foes who  
wronged me.



*Thes.* Great recompense thou nam'st for thine  
abode

In these our realms.

*Œd.* If to thy purpose true,  
Thou dost remain unchanged, till all be o'er.

*Thes.* Distrust me not, I never will betray thee.

*Œd.* I would not bind thee, like the base, by oath.

*Thes.* I count no oath more binding than a promise.

*Œd.* How wilt thou act?

*Thes.* What terror thus alarms thee?

*Œd.* Men will approach—

*Thes.* That charge belongs to these.

*Œd.* Beware, lest if thou leave me—

*Thes.* Tell me not

What is my duty.

*Œd.* He who fears must tell thee.

*Thes.* Fear is a stranger to my breast.

*Œd.* And yet

Thou little know'st what threats—

*Thes.* One thing I know ;

No mortal hand shall force thee from this spot,  
In my despite. The impotence of Wrath  
Vents its wild rage in vain and vehement threats,

Which, when cool Thought its sober sway resumes,  
 Unheeded pass away. Thus, too, for these;  
 Though now they proudly menace, should they strive  
 To drag thee hence by violence, such emprise  
 Will prove a stormy ocean, where immersed,  
 Their shattered bark will sink. Take courage then—  
 If Phœbus hither was indeed thy guide,  
 Without my feebler aid his arm can save thee;  
 And though ourselves be distant, yet our name  
 Shall still avail from insult to protect thee.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Well did Fate thy wanderings lead,  
 Stranger, to this field of fame,  
 Birth-place of the generous steed,  
 Graced by white Colonus' name.<sup>1</sup>  
 Frequent in the dewy glade  
 Here the nightingale is dwelling;

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<sup>1</sup> The sincerity of these encomiums on the beauties of Colonus will not be questioned, if we admit the common notion, that it was the birth-place of Sophocles.

Through embowering ivy's shade,  
Here her plaintive notes are swelling ;  
Through yon grove, from footsteps pure,  
Where unnumbered fruits are blushing—  
From the summer sun secure,  
Screened from wintry whirlwinds rushing ;  
Where, with his fostering nymphs, amid the grove,  
The sportive Bacchus joys to revel or to rove.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Bathed in heaven's ambrosial dew,  
Here the fair narcissus flowers,  
Graced each morn with clusters new,  
Ancient crown of Mightiest Powers ;  
Here the golden crocus blows ;  
Here exhaustless fountains gushing,  
Where the cool Cephissus flows,  
Restless o'er the plains are rushing ;  
Ever as the crystal flood  
Winds in pure transparent lightness ;  
Fresher herbage decks the sod,  
Flowers spring forth in lovelier brightness ;  
Here dance the Muses ; and the Queen of Love  
Oft guides her golden car through this enchanting  
grove.

STROPHE II.

What nor Asia's rich domain,  
 Nor, by Pelops' ancient reign .  
 Famed afar, the Doric coast  
 Through its thousand vales can boast,—  
 Here, by mortal hands unsown,  
 Here, spontaneous and alone,  
 Mark the hallowed plant expand,  
 Terror of each hostile band !  
 Here, with kindly fruit mature,  
 Springs the azure olive pure ;  
 Youth and hoary age combine  
 To revere the plant divine ;  
<sup>2</sup> Morian Jove, with guardian care,  
 Watches ever wakeful there ;  
 And Athena's eye of blue  
 Guards her own loved olive too.

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<sup>2</sup> The sacred olives in the Academia were called *Mopias* ; hence Jupiter, who had an altar there, as protector of the place, had the name of Morian.—Potter.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Let me still my country's fame,  
Still her matchless praise proclaim,  
Sing the wondrous gifts bestowed  
By her potent Patron-God,  
Steeds in fleetness ne'er outvied,  
And the gallant navy's pride.  
Son of Saturn, King, whose sway  
Ocean's restless waves obey,  
Thou to this transcendant praise  
Didst thy favoured Athens raise ;  
Taught by thee the courser's flame  
By the golden curb to tame—  
While the light oar, framed by thee,  
Speeds the swift bark o'er the sea,  
Bounding through the foaming main  
Fleeter than the <sup>3</sup> Nereid train.

*Ant.* O most renowned land ! 'tis now the time  
To prove by action thy transcendant praise.

*Œd.* What wakes new terrors in thy breast, my  
daughter ?

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<sup>3</sup> Literally, follower of the hundred-footed daughters of Nereus.

*Ant.* Creon approaches, not unguarded, hither.

*Œd.* Most honoured strangers, in your aid alone  
My anxious eye must seek the goal of safety.

*Ch.* Be calm ; I will not fail thee, though mine arm  
Be weak and withered by a weight of years,  
Age hath not palsied yet the might of Athens.

*Enter CREON.*

CREON, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

*Cr.* Ye citizens, and children of the soil,  
Your looks, I see, betray at mine approach  
The sudden impulse of awakening fears.  
Your fears are causeless :—be vain threats forborne.  
I come not here to compass aught by force,  
For I ~~am old~~ ; and this most potent state  
Transcends, I know, the mightiest in our Greece ;  
But, bent with age, I come but to restore  
This hapless outcast to his native land ;  
A charge no private voice, but the whole state  
Imposed on me, by kindred blood constrained  
To feel most deeply for a kinsman's woe.  
List to mine errand then, unhappy King,  
And to thy home return ; the state recalls thee ;  
I beyond all by closest ties impelled,  
Who were indeed the basest of mankind,

Did not thy miseries wring my inmost soul,—  
Viewing thee thus, a friendless, homeless exile,  
A wanderer and a fugitive on earth,  
Led by one feeble guide, and that thy daughter.  
Ah ! never thought I to behold her thus,  
Sunk in the depth of wretchedness and shame,  
On thee attendant, and in thy behalf  
A scant relief imploring;—in the flower  
Of ripened youth from nuptial honours torn,  
To scorn and ruffian outrage still exposed.  
What dark and deep reproach, unhappy me !  
On mine own head, and thine, and all our race,  
Have I not charged ? Yet, since in vain we strive  
To shroud that shame, which all must know too well,  
By thy paternal Gods, O Œdipus,  
Yield to my warm persuasions ; hide thy woes  
In thine own city and ancestral halls.  
Bid to this generous state a kind farewell,  
She well deserves it ; but the land that bore  
And gave thee nurture claims superior love.

*Œd.* O thou in all audacious, basely skilled  
E'en from the words of truth to frame deceit,  
Why seek to lure me to those scenes again,  
Where, if beguiled, severest woes await me ?  
When, sunk and struggling with domestic ills,  
My only solace was the hope of exile,

Thou wouldst not then that mournful boon bestow ;  
 But when the frenzy of my soul was calmed,  
 And I had joyed to linger out my days  
 In my once happier home ; then didst thou drive,  
 And spurn me forth to exile. Where was then  
 The kindred tie so much regarded now ?  
 Now, when thou seest this hospitable state  
 And her kind sons concede a welcome refuge,  
 Wouldst thou delude me hence, veiling thy fraud  
 In smooth dissembling words. Thy proffered love,  
 What joy imparts it to the heart that loathes thee ?  
 If from thy prayer, in utmost need preferred,  
 Unheeding one should turn, nor will to aid,  
 But, when thy soul were sated with its wish,  
 Should then obtrude his slow and worthless help,  
 Say—would such empty succour aught delight thee ?  
 Such grace thou bring'st to me ; specious in word,  
 False in itself, and fruitless. I will speak,  
 That to these strangers I may prove thee villain.  
 Thou com'st to lure me—not to mine own home,  
 But to your confines, there to pine, that Thebes  
 May shun th' impending vengeance of this land.  
 It shall not be ; such vengeance still awaits thee.  
 There shall my spirit dwell, a blighting curse.  
 To your devoted state. And for my sons,



Of all the rich domain their father swayed,  
 Be the scant tomb their sole inheritance.  
 Is not my presage of the doom of Thebes  
 More sure than thine ;—yea, 'tis e'en trebly sure,  
 As drawn from truer prophets, Phœbus 'self,  
 And his dread sire, the all-controlling Jove !  
 And hither hast thou come with specious words  
 And most delusive ; but, for thy smooth tongue,  
 Defeat and shame, not safety, shalt thou reap.  
 Since, then, thy toils are spread in vain, away !  
 Leave us to sojourn here ; sunk as we are,  
 Here to reside, we were not wholly wretched.

*Cr.* And dost thou think severer woes impend  
 O'er me from these wild ravings, or thyself ?

*Œd.* Much will it glad me, if in vain thou seek'st  
 Me to persuade, or these my friendly guards.

*Cr.* Thou wretch, not time itself can teach thee  
 wisdom ;  
 But frenzy makes thee hateful e'en in age.

*Œd.* Practised art thou in eloquence ; but one  
 Who smoothly talks on right and wrong alike—  
 Can such a man be virtuous ?

*Cr.* To speak much,  
 And speak in fitting season, differ widely.

*Œd.* How briefly and how wisely dost *thou* speak.

*Cr.* Not so to one whose soul is warped like thine.

*Œd.* I charge thee, hence! nor thus observe  
where most

Befits me sojourn.

*Cr.* I attest, not thee,

But these most friendly strangers, in what terms  
Thou dost reply. If I should force thee!—

*Œd.* Ha!—

And who dare force me, if my guards assent not?

*Cr.* Nay, though I use no force, thou shalt  
repent.

*Œd.* From what base deed arise these menaces?

*Cr.* One of thy daughters is my captive now,  
And this shall be ere long.

*Œd.* Unhappy me!

*Cr.* Ah! thou shalt soon have cause for heavier  
sorrow.

*Œd.* Hast thou my child?

*Cr.* Aye; and design ere long  
To force the other from thee.

*Œd.* Oh! my friends,  
What will ye do? Will ye, too, thus betray me?  
Will ye not spurn the villain from your land?

*Ch.* Stand off, bold stranger;—justice disallows  
The deeds thou late hast done, and still art doing.

*Cr.* This is the moment ; do your office, slaves ;  
Quick,—force her hence, if she refuse to follow.

*Ant.* Ah ! whither shall I fly ? where shall I look,  
To earth or heaven for rescue ?

*Ch.* Wretch ! what dost thou ?

*Cr.* The man I shall not touch, the maid is mine.

*Œd.* O Princes of the land !

*Ch.* Presumptuous stranger,  
Thy deeds are most unjust.

*Cr.* Most just.

*Ch.* And say,  
Where is their justice ?

*Cr.* I but seize mine own.

*Ant.* O Athens ! Athens !

*Ch.* Stranger, how is this ?  
Wilt thou not loose her ? quickly shalt thou feel  
The vengeance of mine hand.

*Cr.* Off with thine hand !

*Ch.* Never from thee, if such thy venturous aim.

*Œd.* If thou wrong me, thou dost incense the  
state.

*Ch.* Have I not told thee thus ?

*Cr.* Straight from thy clasp ;  
Release the virgin.

*Ch.* Dictate not to those

Who do not own thy power.

*Cr.* Again I bid thee loose her.

*Ch.* And again

I bid thee swift depart. Haste, hither haste,

O citizens ! the state is foully wronged ;

My country's rights are outraged ; haste to help me !

*Ant.* Oh strangers, strangers, I am torn away.

*Œd.* My child, my child, where art thou ?

*Ant.* Hurried hence

By lawless violence.

*Œd.* Stretch forth thy hand,

My hapless child !

*Ant.* Alas ! I have no power.

*Cr.* Will ye not drag her hence ?

*Œd.* Unhappy me !

*Cr.* Henceforth, unaided by these props at least,  
Shalt thou roam forth, since thus thy stubborn mood  
Rejects thy country, and thy friends, and me,  
Commissioned forth, although a King, to bring thee.  
Time will, I know, convince thee, that such deeds  
Will ne'er conduce to work thy lasting good,  
Spurning thy friends, and nurturing that wild rage  
Which plunged, and still doth plunge thee, in  
despair.

*Ch.* Hold, stranger, hold !

*Cr.* I warn thee, touch me not.

*Ch.* I will not loose thee, while of these bereft.

*Cr.* Then on thy state wilt thou entail revenge  
For heavier wrongs ; I seize not these alone.

*Ch.* What is thy purpose now ?

*Cr.* To drag *him* hence.

*Ch.* High words are these.

*Cr.* Like deeds will soon ensue,  
Unless the monarch of this land prevent me.

*Œd.* Oh ! shameless boaster ! wilt thou seize  
*me* too ?

*Cr.* Silence ! I charge thee.

*Œd.* Did these Awful Powers  
Enjoin me silence from the curse that now  
Is trembling on my lips, I would not then  
Forbear to curse thee, ruffian ! who hast rent  
From the blind wanderer his last dearest guide.  
For this, on thee and thy devoted race  
May yon bright Sun, All-seeing God, repay  
A dark and dreary age, fraught to the last  
With miseries keen as mine.

*Cr.* Behold ye this,  
Ye natives of the land ?

*Œd.* Thee they behold  
And me ; they know what wrongs I have endured,

While but in words I vent my powerless vengeance.

*Cr.* I will not curb my anger ; but alone,  
Though age-enfeebled, straight will drag thee hence.

*Œd.* Unhappy me !

*Ch.* What insolence is thine,  
If thou but deem'st to dare a deed like this !

*Cr.* I deem.

*Ch.* Then Athens is no more a city.

*Cr.* In a just cause the weak subdue the mighty.

*Œd.* Hear you his vaunts ?

*Ch.* They shall not end in action.

*Cr.* This Jove may know, thou canst not.

*Ch.* Is not this

Atrocious wrong ?

*Cr.* 'Tis wrong ; yet thou must bear it.

*Ch.* Ho citizens !—ho rulers of the land !

Advance with speed,—advance ; far, far e'en now.  
They pass the bounds of right.

*Enter THESEUS.*

THESEUS, ŒDIPUS, CREON, CHORUS.

*Thes.* <sup>3</sup> Why this clamour? what the outrage?  
Urged by what unwonted dread,  
Call ye thus your King adoring where the votive  
steer hath bled  
To the Ocean-King whose altar decks Colonus?  
Quickly say,  
Wherefore from the shrine ye urge me with un-  
welcome speed away?

*Œd.* O noble friend, for well thy voice I know,  
Foul wrongs from this base ruffian have I borne.

*Thes.* What are those wrongs,—how hath he  
injured thee?

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<sup>3</sup> Though the abrupt transition in the metre may sound harshly to the reader, it would have been inconsistent with the main principle of the present translation to have rendered these four lines in heroic measure, as they are trochaics in the original. If, however, according to Pope's celebrated canon,

The sound must seem an echo to the sense,  
it must be acknowledged, that no metre is better adapted to convey the idea of hurried indignation and impetuous surprise.

*Œd.* This Creon, whom thou seest, hath forced away  
My last and only comfort, my loved daughters.

*Thes.* What dost thou say?

*Œd.* My sufferings thou hast heard.

*Thes.* Let one of those who in our presence wait  
Speed instant to the altars, and proclaim  
This mandate to our people, horse and foot,  
To quit the sacred rites, and with all haste  
Secure the passage where the double ways  
Converge in one, ere the lost virgins pass,  
And I, by lawless force discomfited,  
Be held in scorn by my much-injured guest.  
Away, as I have charged thee! For this wretch,  
Did I but feel the wrath his guilt deserves,  
He should not 'scape uninjured from my vengeance.  
Now, by the very laws himself imposed,  
By those same laws, impartial will I judge him.  
Hence never shalt thou part, till thou restore  
The ravished virgins to our presence here;  
For thou hast done a deed, that shames not me  
Alone, but thine own lineage, and thy country;  
Since on a state, by law and justice swayed,  
And of its faith observant—on *this* state,  
Thou hast intruded with unlicensed might,  
To work thy will, and bear away the spoil,



Deeming our land, perchance, of manly hearts  
Devoid,—some haughty despot's crouching slave,  
Or me an abject and degenerate coward.  
Thebes never taught thee this degrading lesson,  
She is not wont to form and nurture baseness ;  
Nor will she praise nor vindicate the deed,  
When she shall learn, that on the sacred rights  
Of me and of my Gods thou hast transgressed,  
Forcing the wretched suppliant from our altars.  
I had not thus intruded on thy state,  
(Though rigid justice sanctified the deed,)  
And lured, or led, a wretched captive thence,  
Without the King's assent, whoe'er he were,  
Knowing too well what to the sheltering state  
Becomes a stranger in a foreign land.  
Thy deeds have shamed thy country, of such shame  
Most undeserving, and protracted years  
Have left thee aged and bereft of wisdom,  
But now our former menace we repeat ;  
Let the lost virgins be at once restored,  
Or in this land will I detain thee, bound  
A slave reluctant—till thou set them free.  
Our will in this accords but with our words.

*Ch.* Seest thou thy peril, stranger ? first I thought  
thee

Generous and noble, as became thy race ;  
Now in thy guilt thou art at once convicted.

*Cr.* It was not, Theseus, that I deemed thy state  
Devoid of martial might or counsel sage,  
As thou hast said, that I have done this deed ;  
But from my firm conviction, of thy realms  
That none would will to harbour and retain  
In my despite a kinsman ;—for I deemed  
Ye could not cherish a polluted wretch  
Stained with a father's blood, from whose dark couch  
Sprung an incestuous progeny. And I knew  
The long-revered tribunal of your land,  
Throned on the Mount of Mars, would never deign  
To grant asylum in her sheltering walls  
To such degraded outcasts. Urged by this,  
I came confiding to arrest my prey ;  
Nor had I gone thus far, save that on me  
And on my race a bitter curse he poured,  
Whence, having suffered wrong, I thus repaid it.  
Resentment knows no soothing balm of age,  
Calmed but in death, it only fails to rouse  
The long departed. Act, then, as thou wilt ;  
I am alone before thee, with no plea  
But justice ;—that in weakness nought avails me—

Yet know, whate'er thy deeds, thus weak with age,  
With equal deeds will I essay to quite thee.

*Œd.* Unblushing villain ! dost thou think to pour  
Contempt on mine old age or on thy own  
With these upbraidings, while thou tell'st a tale  
Of murder, incest, misery, and despair,  
Which I, oh how unwillingly ! endured.  
Such was the will of Heaven, against my house  
Incensed, perchance, for unrepented crimes.  
Thou canst not prove, that by a wilful deed  
I merited such evil, or involved  
Myself, my race, in guilt so dark as this.  
Say, if thou canst, since by the voice divine  
I was foredoomed a father's murderer,—  
Say, how can Justice brand me with such deed,  
Whose doom was presaged ere my life began ?  
If—born to woe—as I, alas ! was born,  
In chance encounter met, I slew my sire,  
Unknowing what I did, or whom I slew,  
Canst thou revile me for unconscious crimes ?  
And, oh thou wretch ! doth it not shame even thee  
Thus to constrain me but to speak of her,  
My wife, my mother, and THY sister too.  
Now I WILL speak ;—no longer will I veil

The tale in silence, since thy shameless tongue  
 Hath forced it from me. Yes—she gave me birth ;  
 I here avow it—Oh accursed doom !  
 Unthinking of her fate as I of mine ;—  
 She gave me birth ; then to her son she bore  
 Fresh sons, and to herself eternal shame.  
 This too I know, though thou with willing mind  
 On me and her hast heaped this keen reproach,  
 Unwillingly I wedded her, and tell  
 This tale with like reluctance. Not for this  
 Shall infamy for ever brand my name ;  
 Nor for my father's blood, though at this deed  
 Are aimed the keenest arrows of thy wrath.  
 And answer truly what I now demand ;—  
 Should one rush forward to attempt thy life,  
 Thou paragon of justice, wouldst thou ask  
 If he who sought to slay thee were thy father ?  
 Or take an instant vengeance ? Sooth I deem,  
 If thou lov'st life, thou wouldst repel the assault  
 With equal force, and think of justice after !  
 To these unconscious crimes the will of Heaven  
 Constrained my path ; and couldst thou from the  
     grave  
 Evoke the spirit of my murdered sire,  
 This plea he would not question. But for thee,

Oh lost to justice! thou hast dared to speak  
While Honour warned to silence; and to charge  
Me in this presence with calumnious blame;  
Yet hast thou deemed it worthy on this state,  
Renowned Athens, and her generous King,  
To fawn with hollow and unmeaning praise;  
How is it thou hast passed her worthiest fame,  
Her proud pre-eminence, of all our states  
In virtue first and reverence to the Gods?  
Yet from this noble land hast thou essayed  
Meanly to steal a wretched suppliant,  
And bear to bondage my unhappy daughters.  
Wherefore I now implore the potent arm  
Of these dread Powers, and bend in earnest prayer  
For their resistless aid, that thou mayst learn  
What manly hearts defend this generous city.

*Ch.* The stranger is most worthy, good my Lord,  
And though his woes are countless, they but lend  
A stronger title to thy friendly succour.

*Thes.* Enough of words;—the lawless ruffians  
speed,  
While we, the injured, stand inactive here.

*Cr.* What task to my weak age wouldst thou  
prescribe?

*Thes.* That thou precede, and guide me to the spot,

That if the captive maidens near this grove  
Are yet detained, thou mayst at once reveal them,  
Though, if thy band be fled, this toil avails not.  
Others are now abroad, whose sure pursuit  
They never shall escape—to thank the Gods  
For villany successful. Go before ;  
The doom for others destined now is thine,  
And Fate, at length, in thine own toils hath snared  
thee;—

Brief are the triumphs gained by guilty fraud.  
Nor rest on other aid. I know full well,  
By thine insulting vaunts, thou didst not come  
Unarmed or unattended to this outrage ;  
Some power upholds thee in this bold emprise.  
But this demands our care, nor must we leave  
Our state thus baffled by a single villain.  
This dost thou comprehend, or is it said  
In vain, as when this insult first was planned ?

*Cr.* Nay, spare thy threats, I cannot beard thee  
here ;

At home we too shall know what best becoms us.

*Theo.* Away, and, threaten as thou wilt. Do thou,  
O Œdipus, undaunted here remain ;  
And, save in death, I will not cease mine aid  
Till thou again embrace thy rescued daughters.

*Œd.* Most honoured Theseus, for thy generous soul,  
 And ready succour to our helpless age,  
 May the Gods crown thee with their choicest  
 blessings.

[*Exeunt* THESEUS and CREON.]

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

⁴ Oh ! were I present 'mid the fray  
 Where warriors meet in stern array,  
 And clanging arms resound,  
 Or by the hallowed Pythian shrine,  
 Or where unnumbered torches shine  
 The gleaming shores around ;

---

⁴ The chorus, concluding that an engagement must ensue, wish themselves with their brave countrymen, when they should overtake the forces of Creon, whether it were in the plains of Marathon, characterised by the temple there dedicated to the Pythian Apollo, or on the shores of Eleusis, or near Leucogeos, the domain of the tribe of Œa. The latter part of the strophe is an allusion to the silence observed in the Eleusinian mysteries ; the priests were called Eumolpidæ, from Eumolpus, the first hierophant. — Potter.

Where Awful Powers in mystery  
 Veil the dread rites, whose golden key  
 Locks deep in silent awe divine  
 Their priests, Eumolpus' honoured line.

Thither were borne the virgin pair,  
 There led the King his martial band,  
 There, sword to sword, and hand to hand,  
 The strife they soon shall dare.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Or westward do the warriors speed,  
 Where high o'er Œa's fertile mead  
 The white rock rears its brow?  
 On fiery steed or rolling car,  
 Say, flock they to the deepening war?

For Mars is wakening now  
 His legions ardent for the fight,  
 And Athens pours her martial might.  
 From every rein the lightnings glance,  
 As high on glittering steeds advance  
 The youthful bands, who proudly own  
 Athena, thy superior sway,  
 Or, grateful, votive homage pay  
 To Rhea's honoured son.



## STROPHE II.

Say, do they fight, or linger still ?

Glad hopes my bounding breast inflame ;

The virgins, wronged by causeless ill,

Wronged by a haughty kinsman's will,

Soon shall my King reclaim.

Jove, Jove, to-day will aid the right,

And I forebode a prosperous fight.

Oh ! could I seize the wild dove's wing,

And to yon clouds my pinions fling,

That my glad eye might beam to see

The combat and the victory !

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Thou of the all-pervading eye !

In Heaven by subject Gods adored,

Jove ! from thy radiant throne on high

Send might, and joy, and victory,

To grace my country's Lord !

Daughter of Jove, Athena ! hear ;

Thou, Phœbus, lift thy fatal spear,

With thy chaste sister, skilled to slay

With certain aim the forest-prey,

Oh come, with prompt and potent hand,

To aid my people and my land.

Thou wilt not, wandering stranger, in this hope  
Count me a faithless prophet ; for I see  
Thy rescued daughters swift advancing here.

*Œd.* Where, where, what say'st ?—what said'st  
thou ?

*Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE.*

THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

*Ant.* Oh, my father !

My dearest father ! would some pitying God  
Grant thee to gaze on this most generous monarch,  
Who hath restored us to thy welcome arms.

*Œd.* My child—and are ye near me ?

*Ant.* Yea ; the hands  
Of Theseus and his gallant band have saved us.

*Œd.* Come, O my children, to a father's arms,  
Who never, never, thought again to feel  
Your loved embrace.

*Ant.* That transport, then, be thine ;—  
With equal joy we share it.

*Œd.* Where, indeed,  
Where are ye ?—

*Ant.* Here, together we approach thee.

*Œd.* My dearest blossoms !

*Ant.* To a father's breast  
His offspring all are dear.

*Œd.* Ye loved supports  
Of my weak age !

*Ant.* Sad guardians of the wretched !

*Œd.* I clasp my best-beloved, nor can die  
Hapless in all, while ye are left to bless me.  
Press, then, my daughters, to a father's side ;  
Grow to the parent-breast ; and close, at length,  
My dark and dreary pilgrimage in peace.  
But first the manner of your rescue tell ;  
Brief be the tale, as fits your modest years.

*Ant.* Here stands our great preserver. Ask of him,  
So will my tale be brief, and quickly told.

*Œd.* O marvel not, dear stranger ! though I dwell  
With prolix transport on my children, saved  
Beyond my hope ;—well do I know from thee  
Springs this delight, the boon is only thine,  
Thou hast preserved them ; yea, and thou alone.  
For this, on thee and on thy state may Heaven  
Pour down such blessings as my warm heart prays,  
Since in your state alone of all mankind  
Have I discerned unsullied piety,  
Justice unwarped, and sacred truth unstained.

Oh could my grateful thanks attest thy worth !  
 For all my blessings flow from thee alone.  
 Stretch forth, oh noble King, the hand that saved us,  
 That I may clasp it, and confess thy grace  
 With the warm kiss of ardent gratitude.  
 Yet what have I implored ! should a lost wretch  
 Dare but to touch the unpolluted form  
 Of virtue pure as thine ? It may not be ;  
 Didst thou assent, I would not thus defile thee.  
 They, they alone, whom bitterest woes have wrung,  
 Aright can pity wretchedness like mine.  
 Farewell, my Lord ; yet, while I linger here,  
 Still let thy friendship, still thine aid be mine.

*Thes.* I marvel not, that in the first warm thrill  
 Of heartfelt transport for thy rescued daughters,  
 Thou didst not promptly speak the thanks our aid  
 Might seem to merit, nor doth such delay  
 In aught displease us. Not from empty words  
 Would we seek honour, but from manly deeds.  
 I prove it thus : in all our promise pledged,  
 That pledge hath been redeemed ; I here restore  
 Thy daughters, living, from his threats unharmed.  
 And why should I recount, in vaunting words,  
 How conquest crowned our arms, when thou mayst  
 learn

From these thy daughters? But direct thy thoughts  
To what befel me as I hasted hither ;  
Brief to recount, yet worthy of surprise.  
Events, though trivial, prudence duly weighs.

*Œd.* What is it, son of Ægeus? for thy words  
Are dark to me, nor can I guess their import.

*Thes.* They say a man, no citizen of Thebes,  
Yet to thy blood allied, in suppliant guise  
At Neptune's altar sits, where I performed  
The sacred rites, when summoned to the rescue.

*Œd.* Whence doth he come? what boon implore  
of me?

*Thes.* I know but this; they tell me—at thy hand  
He seeks brief audience, and no greater grace.

*Œd.* Why this? nought trivial doth that seat  
portend!

*Thes.* They say he asks but to confer with thee  
A few brief moments, and return in safety.

*Œd.* Who can he be, thus suppliant at the altar?

*Thes.* Bethink thee, is there none of kindred blood  
At Argos, who may crave a boon like this?

*Œd.* Cease, cease, most honoured Monarch.

*Thes.* What means this?

*Œd.* Entreat me not.

*Thes.* And wherefore not entreat thee?

*Œd.* Too well I know the stranger-suppliant now.

*Thes.* And who is he? and why should I rebuke him?

*Œd.* My son, my foul abhorrence: but to hear His voice, O King! would deeply gall my breast.

*Thes.* Yet wherefore? Though thou hear his prayer, thy will

Is free to spurn it; can it harm thee aught

To grant him audience?

*Œd.* O, my Lord, his voice

Is harsh and hateful to a father's ear!

Then urge me not to grant request like this.

*Thes.* But first beware; doth not his suppliant seat, And the high sanction of the Gods constrain thee?

*Ant.* O yield to me, my father, though by years Unschooled in wisdom I presume to speak;

And to thy suppliant grant the grace he asks.

Revere the Power in whose high name he prays thee,

Relent to us, and bear my brother's presence;

His words, though uncongenial, are not fraught

With power to force thee from thy fixed design.

What ill can rise from listening but to words

By which the noblest counsels are declared?

Art thou not still his father? For this cause,

Though most unnatural were his deeds to thee;  
It is not meet that thou shouldst thus repay  
Evil for evil. Yield, then, to his prayer;  
Others have felt the curse of thankless children,  
And burnt with equal anger,—till, appeased  
By mild remonstrances of mutual friends,  
Once more the father in their breasts revived.  
Ah! dwell not now on those unnumbered woes,  
Which thou hast borne for deeds unconscious wrought  
Against thy parents, though I know too well,  
If that on these thou look, 'twill prove at once  
What pregnant sufferings spring from rage indulged;  
My truth, alas! is too severely proved  
By those dark eye-balls,—dark in endless night.  
Relent, then, to our prayers. It ill beseems  
That they should ask so oft who ask for justice,  
Or that thine heart, itself by kindness soothed,  
Knows not by kindness to requite the grace.

*Œd.* Thou hast prevailed, my daughter, though  
assent,

While pleasing, is reluctant—take thy wish.  
This I forewarn thee, stranger; if he come,  
Let not his ruffian-hand attempt my life.

*Thes.* Enough—my honour needs no second pledge.

Old man, I scorn to boast ; but while the Gods  
Still grant me life and safety, thou art safe.

*Exit THESEUS.*

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

Estranged from wisdom's rule appears  
The man, whose restless mind  
Aspires to life beyond the years  
To mortal date assigned.  
Years linger on ; but in their train  
Lead cares more restless, keener pain ;  
And when beyond Hope's utmost bound  
Thy wish is won, ah what can cheer  
The joyless breast, when hovering near  
Relentless Death has frowned ?  
No festive dance, or nuptial wreath,  
Or magic of the melting lyre,  
Can wake in age the stifled fire,  
Or charm the sleep of death.



## ANTISTROPHE I.

O better were it not to be ;—  
Or when the infant-eye  
Opens on light and misery,  
To pass in that first sigh  
Whence first we came. Youth onward speeds,  
And in his train of folly leads  
Delusive pleasures, light and vain—  
What restless toils are absent there,  
What woes, swift darkening to despair ?—  
In that disastrous train  
Are Strife, Sedition, Envy, Wrath ;—  
While Age, morose with countless woes,  
Dark, cheerless, friendless, waits to close  
The drear and downward path.

## EPODE.

Nor mine alone these ills to bear,  
Thou, too, the mournful lot must share.  
As the wild billows fiercely roar  
Round the white crags and northern shore ;  
So fierce on thy devoted brow  
The waves of woe are beating now,  
And sorrows round thee pour ;—

Some from the sinking orb of day,  
Some where he darts his orient ray,  
Some from the sultry noontide beam,  
And some from Midnight's starry gleam.

*Ant.* Hither, it seems, the stranger comes, my  
father,  
All unattended, and dissolved in tears.

*Œd.* Who is he?

*Ant.* 'Tis the same we deemed before,  
And Polynices stands before thee now.

*Enter* POLYNICES.

POLYNICES, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE,  
CHORUS.

*Pol.* Ah me! what shall I do? Shall my first tears  
Gush forth for mine own sorrows, or for those  
Which now I see my aged sire endure?  
Whom, a sad exile in a stranger-land,  
By you alone, my sisters, have I found  
Attended, and arrayed in this mean garb,  
Whose squalid vestments, worn by wandering bare,

Defile his aged form, while o'er his brow,  
Reft of its visual orbs, the matted locks  
Stream to each passing gale ; with such vile garb,  
Too well, it seems, his scanty food accords.  
Late, late I learn the measure of thy woes,  
And, though of men most worthless, I attest  
The Gods, I come but to relieve thy need.  
Ah ! seek not this from others. By the throne  
Of mighty Jove, associate of his sway,  
Sits gentle Mercy, judge of human deeds ;  
Let her be present to thy soul, my father.  
The guilt we have incurred may be redeemed,  
Though keen remorse can nought avail us now.  
Why art thou silent?—  
Speak to me, O my father, one kind word ;  
Repulse me not. Wilt thou not deign reply,  
But sternly thrust me forth, dishonoured, shamed  
With mute contempt, unknowing whence thy wrath  
Burns thus relentless ? Aid me, O my sisters,  
Ye are his children too ; O seek to move  
Th' obdurate sternness of my angry father,  
Nor let him thus, without one answering word,  
Dismiss in scorn the suppliant of the God.

*Ant.* Speak, my unhappy brother, speak thy  
wish ;

Oft words are armed with mild persuasive power ;  
And if they rouse resentment, or awake :  
The dormant pity, oft compel reply  
From the closed lips of deep and angry silence.

*Pol.* Then will I speak ; for thou hast counselled  
well.

Imploring first the God (from whose dread shrine  
The King despatched me hither, granting first  
A free communion and a safe return,)  
To be the great auxiliar of my prayer.  
Such grace, kind strangers, I implore from you,  
From these, my sisters, from my sire himself.  
Now, O my father, will I tell the cause  
Why thus I sought thee. From my native land  
I have been driven to exile ; for no crime,  
Save that I claimed to mount thy royal throne,  
By birth my fair and free inheritance.  
For this Eteocles, thy younger son,  
Forced me from Thebes, not by superior plea  
Of solid reasoning, or by nobler deeds  
Of conquering arms triumphant, but the state  
By fraudulent arts persuading. The fell cause  
Of all our feud was thine avenging curse ;  
This, too, prophetic oracles confirm.  
Then to the Doric Argos I repaired,

Espoused Adrastus' daughter, and received,  
As friends and comrades in my righteous cause,  
The best and bravest of the Apian chiefs.  
With these allied, a seven-fold troop I lead  
To hostile Thebes, in this good cause prepared  
To die, or hurl th' usurper from his throne.  
Enough of this. Then wherefore came I hither?  
To breathe, my father, fervent prayers to thee,  
Both for myself and my confederate friends,  
Who in seven bands, by seven bold chieftains led,  
Are now encircling all the Theban plain.  
Mighty to wield the spear, and skilled to trace  
The flight of birds, Amphiaraus is there;  
Ætolian Tydeus next, great Œneus' son;  
Eteoclus the Argive leads the third;  
The fourth Hippomedon, sent to the fight  
By Taläus his sire; then Capaneus,  
Who vaunts ere long that his victorious arm  
Shall raze to earth the haughty Theban towers;  
Parthenopæus of Arcadian birth  
Springs to the contest, from his mother's fame  
His name deriving, proved the noble son  
Of Atalanta, who so long maintained  
Her virgin-beauty, matchless in the chase;  
And I, thy son,—or, if not thine, the son

Of angry Fortune, yet who bear thy name,—  
 Conduct to Thebes the fearless Argive band.  
 Now, by thy daughters, by thy life, my father,  
 We all accord in one assenting prayer ;  
 Heap not on me the burthen of thy wrath,  
 Seeking due vengeance on a brother's head,  
 Who drove me forth, and robbed me of a throne.  
 If faith be due to Heaven's prophetic voice,  
 Whom thou shalt succour, them must victory grace.  
 Now by thy native fountains, by the Gods  
 Who guard the rights of kindred, I implore thee  
 Yield to my prayer, remit thy rooted wrath ;  
 I, too, am poor and exiled, e'en as thou.  
 Consigned to equal miseries, both must bow  
 To a strange master in a stranger-land,  
 While he, exultant in his royal halls,  
 Derides our common doom of bitterness ;  
 Whom, so thou aid my purpose, with brief toil  
 Soon will I hurl degraded from his throne.  
 Then to thy regal state will I restore thee,  
 Restore myself, and drive the wretch to exile.  
 This, if thou aid, is no unmeaning vaunt ;—  
 Without thy help I hope not ev'n for safety.

*Ch.* Now, for his sake, who sent the suppliant here,  
 Deign, Œdipus, meet answer to his prayer,

Whate'er thou wilt, and let him part from hence.

*Œd.* Save that the honoured Monarch of these  
                  realms

Hath sent him hither, and esteemed it just  
That we should deign reply, I tell ye, friends,  
He never should have heard my voice again.  
That grace accorded, let him hearken now  
Our firm response, and triumph as he may.  
Oh most abandoned ! when the very throne  
Was thine, which now in Thebes thy brother holds,  
Thou didst thyself expel thy wretched sire,  
Didst spurn me from my country, and consign me  
To this most abject penury, which now  
Excites thy tears ; but never did *my* woes  
Inflict one pang, till they became thine own.  
Those ills I may not weep, but must endure ;  
And ever, ever must remembrance wake  
Thy worse than parricide. Thou didst enfold me  
In all this web of misery ; by thy will  
Constrained, I wandered sadly forth to crave  
The slender pittance of my daily food.  
Save that the care of duteous daughters soothed me,  
Long since, for thee, should I have ceased to live ;  
But they have saved me, they sustain me still ;  
Unlike their weaker sex, with manly hearts

They toil unwearied in a father's cause ;—  
 Ye are not *mine*, but aliens from my blood.  
 Wherefore with other eyes will Heaven look down  
 On this emprise ere long, when these thy troops  
 Are marched to Thebes. It shall not be thy lot  
 To win the city ;—rather shall thy blood  
 And thy base brother's stain her fatal plain.  
 Such were the curses of my first despair ;  
 Such now with keener hatred I invoke  
 To wreak my vengeance, that ye late may learn  
 The reverence due to parents ; nor, though blind,  
 With causeless insult wound a powerless father.  
 My gentle daughters never acted thus.  
 For this, on thy proud throne and royal seat  
 Shall sit th' avenging curse, if Justice, famed  
 Of old, by Jove's august tribunal throned,  
 Maintain the ancient laws unbroken still.  
 Hence to thy doom, Accursed ! I disclaim  
 A father's part in thee, thou scorn of men ;  
 And with thee bear the curse I call to blast thee :  
 That thou mayst ne'er thy rightful throne regain,  
 And never to the Argive vales return ;  
 But fall unpitied by a kindred hand,  
 Requiting first thine exile by his death.  
 Thus do I curse thee : and I here invoke



Dark Erebus, the hated Sire of Hell,  
To give thee dwelling in his deepest gloom ;—  
These venerable Powers, and mighty Mars,  
Whose anger cursed thee with this deadly feud.  
Depart with this mine answer. Hence, and tell  
Th' assembled Thebans and thy bold allies,  
Such is the meed which Œdipus repays  
To his abhorred and most unnatural offspring.

*Ch.* I cannot greet thee for thy prosperous way,  
O Polynices! now return with speed.

*Pol.* O most ill-omened journey! fatal close!  
Oh my devoted friends! was it for this  
We left the Argive towers? Unhappy me!  
I will not to my faithful friends impart  
These dire predictions, nor renounce th' emprise,  
But rush in silence on my certain doom.  
Oh my beloved sisters! by the Gods!  
Since ye have heard my father's ruthless curse,  
Should that fell curse in all its fury fall,  
If ere ye visit your paternal Thebes,  
Ah! spurn me not dishonoured; but inter  
My sad remains with due funereal rites:  
So shall the praise ye have most justly earned  
For duteous labour in a father's cause  
Be crowned with added lustre, if ye pay

The last kind office to a brother's corpse.

*Ant.* O Polynices, I implore thee yield  
To mine impassioned prayer.

*Pol.* Antigone,  
My best-beloved sister, speak thy will.

*Ant.* O lead thy bold confederates back to Argos,  
Nor plunge thy country and thyself in ruin.

*Pol.* It cannot be. If here I doubt or pause,  
My gallant friends renounce the cause for ever.

*Ant.* My dearest brother! wherefore wilt thou  
yield

To unavailing fury? Canst thou reap  
Renown or profit from thy country's ruin?

*Pol.* To fly were baseness, and I will not fly.  
Mine is the birth-right; and I cannot brook  
The insults of my brother.

*Ant.* Seest thou not  
His' boding stern; too plain, alas! he spake it,  
That death impends o'er both?

*Pol.* Such was his presage;  
But never, never shall this feud be staunched.

*Ant.* Ah! woe is me!—Yet say, will they who  
hear

<sup>3</sup> The malediction of Œdipus.

These fateful omens, aiding still thy cause,  
Rush headlong on destruction ?

*Pol.* None shall hear them.

A prudent general fans enlivening hope,  
But wisely veils the omen of ill-fortune.

*Ant.* Is this thy sad and stern resolve, my brother ?

*Pol.* Detain me not. To this high enterprise,  
Though dark and hopeless from a father's curse,  
Be all my thoughts directed. But may Jove  
With favouring eye behold you, so ye grant  
My last request, and honour me in death ;  
In life ye cannot aid me. Now, my sister,  
Now let me go, and take a fond farewell,  
A last farewell ! we meet in life no more.

*Ant.* Then am I lost indeed.

*Pol.* Mourn not for me.

*Ant.* My dearest brother, can I check these tears,  
If frantic thus thou rush on open death ?

*Pol.* If fate so wills, I perish.

*Ant.* Yet,—oh yield—  
Yield to a sister's prayer.

*Pol.* Persuade me not  
To deeds of baseness.

*Ant.* But if thou shalt perish,  
I am most wretched.

*Pol.* By the hand of Heaven  
Our doom must be decided. But from you  
May Heaven, propitious to my prayer, avert  
Sadness or suffering. Ye are most unworthy  
To mourn the blighting influence of despair.

*Exit* POLYNICES.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

*Ch.* Redoubling sorrows to me now,  
This sightless stranger bears,  
Laden with heavier doom,  
If fate achieve no remedy.  
But never can I deem Heaven's high decree  
Is breathed in vain.  
Time, all-beholding Time,  
Looks on, and hastens still  
To fill the destined measure of his woes—  
Great Jove! what sudden thunders peal?

*Œd.* My daughters, O my daughters, is there nigh  
One who will speed to call the noble Theseus?

*Ant.* Why, dearest father, should the King be  
called?

*Œd.* This winged thunder peals from lofty Jove  
To bear me to the grave. Send, send with speed.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Ch.* Lo! yet again the mighty peal,  
Rolled by the hand of Jove,  
Grows louder; and mine hair  
With thrilling horror stands erect.  
My soul is troubled; for the lightning blaze  
Again flames high.  
What end is thus foretold?—  
I tremble—Not in vain,  
Nor void of dark event, these thunders roll;—  
O mighty thunders! mightier Jove!

*Œd.* This, O my daughters, is the hour fore-  
doomed  
To close mine ills;—there is no respite now.

*Ant.* How know'st thou this? whence is such  
presage drawn?

*Œd.* I know it well; but haste, once more I bid  
thee,  
Require thy Monarch's instant presence hither.

## STROPHE II.

*Ch.* Hark!—hark!

Again the ceaseless thunder rolls  
In unabated wrath.  
Be merciful, dread Power! be merciful.  
If o'er my mother-land thy wrath impends,  
Avert the wrathful stroke from me,  
Though on this wretch, oppressed with woes,  
I gazed,—and, gazing, pitied his despair.  
Dread Jove, on thee I call.

*Œd.* Is not the monarch nigh? Still will he find me,  
My children, living, nor of sense bereft?

*Ant.* What secret wouldst thou to his faith confide?

*Œd.* For all his goodness, I would now repay  
The proffered recompense I pledged before.

ANTISTROPHE II.

*Ch.* Haste—haste,  
Speed, speed thy pace, my son, my son,  
Though on the utmost shore,  
To the dread Monarch of the Main thy hand  
Present the votive victim, come, O come!  
To thee, thy state, and martial friends,  
The grateful stranger would repay  
A guerdon meet for your kind courtesy.  
Come, my good Lord, O come.

*Enter THESEUS.*

THESEUS, ÆDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

*Thes.* Again this general shout and wild dismay?—  
I hear your voices, and the stranger's too.  
Did the red lightnings or tempestuous hail  
Burst o'er your heads? When Jove's indignant voice  
Is heard in thunder, such may well be dreaded.

*Æd.* Well art thou come, my Lord. Some fa-  
vouring God

In happy moment sped thy footsteps hither.

*Thes.* What new event hath fallen, O son of Laius?

*Æd.* The close of my sad pilgrimage draws on;  
But let me first to thee and to thy land  
Perform my promise; then I die with honour.

*Thes.* What symbols presage thine impending fate?

*Æd.* The Gods themselves are heralds of my doom,  
In none of all the former signs proved faithless.

*Thes.* How say'st thou, stranger, these are plainly  
shown?

*Æd.* The fierce and frequent thunders, the red flames  
Hurled by th' unconquered hand of lofty Jove!

*Thes.* Thy words demand my credence; for I see  
They have proved false in nought. Declare thou then  
What duty now demands.

*Œd.* Great son of Ægeus,  
 I will inform thee what awaits thy state,  
 What lasting glories, never to decay.  
 Now will I lead thee, by no friendly hand  
 Sustained or guided, where my life must close ;  
 But never, never breathe to mortal ear  
 The place of that mysterious sepulchre ;—  
 Then shall it guard thy land with firmer might  
 Than myriad shields and mercenary spears.  
 There too alone, secluded, shalt thou learn  
 Unuttered mysteries, which I dare not breathe  
 To these thy subjects, no, nor my loved daughters,  
 Though dearest to my soul. Do thou maintain  
 Inviolable silence till thine hour is nigh ;  
 Then breathe them only to the noblest chief ;  
 Bid him disclose them to the next alone ;  
 Thus ever shall ye hold your royal seat  
 Impregnable to Thebes. Unnumbered states,  
 Though swayed by wise and righteous laws, decline  
 To wrong and foul oppression. Yet the Gods  
 Behold unerringly, though late, when man  
 Turns from their hallowed awe to lawless pride ;  
 Beware, O Theseus, lest such fall be thine.  
 Yet why teach virtue to the heart that loves it ?  
 Now the strong impulse of th' inspiring God



Leads to the spot ; then let us onward now,  
 Nor shrink in awe-struck reverence. O my daughters !  
 Follow me thither ; I am now your guide,  
 As ye so long have been your wretched father's.  
 Advance—yet touch me not ; unaided all,  
 That long and last asylum shall I find,  
 Where this worn frame is fated to repose.  
 This—this way pass ; for Hermes in that path  
 Directs me, and the Queen of those dark realms.  
 O light, dear light, long from mine eyes obscured,  
 Thy last, last beam now warms this nerveless frame.  
 Onward I pass to hide life's waning ray  
 In death's chill darkness. Most illustrious King,  
 Blessings on thee, thy state, thy faithful friends ;  
 Oft in the hour of conquest and of fame  
 Revere my memory, prosper by my doom.

*[Exeunt ŒDIPUS, THESEUS, ANTIGONE,*  
*and ISMENE.*

*Chorus.*

STROPHE.

If to thee, Eternal Queen,  
 Empress of the worlds unseen ;  
 Mighty Pluto, if to thee,  
 Hell's terrific Deity,

Lips of mortal mould may dare  
 Breathe the solemn suppliant prayer,  
 Grant the stranger swift release,  
 Bid the mourner part in peace,  
 Guide him where in silence deep  
 All that once were mortal sleep.  
 Since relentless Fate hath shed  
 Sorrows o'er thy guiltless head,  
 In thy pangs let mercy stay thee,  
 In the grave let rest repay thee.

ANTISTROPHE.

Powers of Night ! Infernal Maids !  
 Monster-guardian of the shades !  
 Who, as antique legends tell,  
 Keep'st the brazen porch of Hell,  
 And with ceaseless yell dost rave  
 Fearful from thy gloomy cave ;  
 Thou, whose mighty bulk of yore  
 Earth to sable Tartarus bore ;  
 Veil thy terrors, quell thine anger,  
 Gently meet the passing stranger,  
 Sinking now with welcome speed  
 To the dwellings of the dead.

Thou, the ward of Hell who keepest !

Thou, the guard who never sleepest !

*Enter a COLONIANTE.*

COLONIANTE, CHORUS.

*Col.* Brief words, my countrymen, may tell the  
tale,

That Œdipus is dead ; but *how* he died,  
With what most strange and solemn circumstance,  
Admits no brief recital.

*Ch.* Is he then,  
Th' unhappy ! now at rest ?

*Col.* Yea. Know thou well  
The sorrows of his heart are hushed for ever.

*Ch.* How—by celestial aid and calm release ?

*Col.* Much wilt thou marvel, when this too thou  
hearest.

Thou know'st, for thou wert present, how from  
hence

He walked, supported by no friendly hand,  
But to us all a sure unfaltering guide.

Soon as he gained the rough and steep descent,  
 With brazen steps deep-rooted in the earth,  
 He stood, where varying paths converge in one,  
 Beside the caverned gulf, where yet remain  
 The fixed memorials of that mutual faith  
 Of old by Theseus and Pirithous pledged ;  
 And standing midway there, betwixt that spot  
 And the Thorician rock, the hollow thorn  
 And sepulchre of stone—he sate; and there  
 His squalid weeds ungirding, to his side  
 He called his daughters, charging them to bring  
 A pure libation from the living stream,  
 And holy lavers ; they to Ceres' hill,  
 Clad with fresh-glistening verdure, haste with speed  
 To do his bidding ; then with lavers cleanse,  
 And in a decent robe their sire array,  
 As ancient custom's funeral rites enjoin.  
 These sadly-pleasing rites at length discharged,  
 Nor aught unfinished of their sire's command,  
 The Infernal Jove deep thundered from beneath.  
 The timid virgins trembled as they heard,  
 Then clasped their father's knees, dissolved in tears,  
 And smote their breasts with wailings long and loud.  
 He, when he heard that strange and sudden sound,

Pressed them in fond embrace ; and “ O my  
children,”

He said, “ to-day ye have no more a father ;  
The grave hath closed o’er all that once was mine ;  
And your long painful task is now fulfilled—  
Painful I know, my daughters, though one thought  
Still soothes and sweetens these protracted toils ;  
For never, never in a father’s breast  
Glowed fonder love than I have felt for you ;  
Of this bereft, on what remains of life  
Shall better fortune smile.” With frequent sobs,  
Locked in each other’s arms, they thus bewailed ;  
But when their piercing cries an instant ceased,  
And the first thrill was hushed, silence ensued,—  
A silence, oh how awful !—From beneath,  
With deep mysterious voice, called one unseen,  
While our damp hair in stiffening horror stood.  
Again, and yet again, the God exclaimed,  
“ Come, Œdipus, why pause we to depart ?  
Come, Œdipus ; for thou hast tarried long.”  
Soon as he heard the summons of the God,  
He called the royal Theseus to his side,  
And thus addressed him, “ Dear and noble King !  
Thy hand, th’ unbroken pledge of spotless faith,

Give to my children ; ye, my daughters, too,  
 Like pledge return ; and promise me, O King,  
 That thou wilt ne'er betray them ; but perform  
 Whate'er thy soul, benevolent, may deem  
 Congenial to their welfare." Our good Lord,  
 Like a true King, the promise promptly gave,  
 And stamped it with an oath. Accomplished this,  
 Straight in his feeble arms did Œdipus  
 Embrace his daughters, and thus bade farewell ;—  
 " Ye, my loved children, yield with generous hearts  
 To stern necessity, and hence retire.  
 Seek not to see what mortal may not gaze on,  
 Or hear what never mortal sense may hear.  
 Away with speed ; for to the King alone  
 To rest, and mark the dread event, is given."  
 We heard in wonder, and departed all ;  
 And with the sorrowing virgins from the spot  
 Receded ; backward in short space we gazed,  
 To seek the stranger ; but he was not there.  
 We marked the King alone, with close-pressed hands  
 Shading his brow, as if appalled by forms  
 More terrible than human sight could bear.  
 A few short moments ;—and we saw him bowed  
 Prostrate—adoring in one prayer the Earth,  
 And high Olympus, dwelling of the Gods.

But what the vanished stranger's wondrous fate,  
Save royal Theseus, man can never tell.  
For neither red and angry bolts of Jove  
Consumed him as he stood ; nor maddening storm  
Hath swept his relics to the rolling sea ;  
Some God conveyed him hence, or yawning earth  
Oped a new passage through her pathless caves,  
A painless passage to the realms of peace.  
Such doom demands no wailing ; for he fell  
By slow disease unwithered, of mankind  
Most wondrous in his doom. Though this my tale  
Excite suspicion of my cooler sense,  
I will not yield to those who count me senseless.

*Ch.* Where are the maidens, with the friends  
who led them ?

*Col.* They are not far ; the sound of wailing wild  
Proclaims too well that they approach us now.

*Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE.*

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, COLONATE, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

*Ant.* Ah ! 'tis no common or familiar grief  
That wounds us now—we mourn not now alone

Our guilty birth from that unhappy sire,  
For whose beloved sake,  
Serene and patient, countless toils we bore ;  
Now are we plunged in ills unspeakable,  
Which we behold and bear.

*Ch.* What is it ?

*Ant.* 'Twere vain, my friends, to tell—  
'Tis past the imagining of one who feels not.

*Ch.* Hath he departed ?

*Ant.* He hath passed as thou  
Wouldst most desire his miseries should close.  
And wherefore ? Nor destroying war  
Nor ocean wrought his doom ;  
But earth in terror opened wide,  
And snatched him to his rest—  
Ah me ! and o'er our eyes  
A deadly night hath closed.  
Henceforth, alas ! in what far-distant clime,  
Wandering o'er what wild billowy sea,  
A refuge shall we find ?

STROPHE II.

*Is.* Alas ! I know not.  
O that remorseless death  
Would grant the hapless child



To share her father's tomb. Henceforth, to me,  
Life is but lingering death.

*Ch.* Oh best of daughters ! most beloved !  
In resignation must ye bow  
To Heaven's high will, nor thus indulge despair.  
Who would condemn your lot ?

## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Ant.* Then man, alas ! may long for woe itself :  
What mortals deem most joyless was my joy,  
While these fond arms his aged form embraced.  
My father, my beloved,  
Entombed for ever in the cheerless grave,  
Dear to my heart wert thou when bowed in age,  
And dear shalt ever be !

*Ch.* He hath accomplished—

*Ant.* Yea ; he hath indeed  
Obtained the warmest wishes of his breast.

*Ch.* What wished he thus ?

*Ant.* He wished to breathe his last  
In a strange land ; in a strange land indeed  
He died ; and in eternal gloom  
Now sleeps beneath the sod,  
Leaving no transient woe ; for long,  
My father, these sad eyes

Ceaseless shall weep. I know  
 No hope that shall erase  
 This woe. Alas! it was not well to die  
 In a strange land, and dying leave  
 Thy daughter desolate!

ANTISTROPHE II.

*Is.* Wretched Ismene!

What doom awaits me now,  
 Forsaken, friendless all!  
 Thee, too, beloved maid,—thee, as myself,  
 Of a loved sire bereft.

*Ch.* Yet think how blessed was the close,  
 Dear virgins, of his dreary course.  
 Cease, cease your wailings; none of mortal birth  
 From wretchedness are free.

STROPHE III.

*Ant.* Once more, dear sister, let us hence!

*Is.* And by what aim impelled?

*Ant.* My bosom burns to—

*Is.* What?

*Ant.* To see the funeral-bed—

*Is.* Of whom?

*Ant.* My father! wretched me.

*Is.* Would Heaven thy purpose sanction? Seest  
thou not—

*Ant.* Why thus repress me?

*Is.* Think on this—

*Ant.* Why yet deter me?

*Is.* He lies unburied, and apart from all.

*Ant.* O lead, and slay me there.

*Is.* Woe, woe, unhappy! where  
Again, deserted and forlorn,  
Shall I in anguish pine?

ANTISTROPHE III.

*Ch.* Dear virgins, calm your anxious fears.

*Ant.* Ah! whither shall we fly?

*Ch.* Already have ye fled  
Where wrong shall never fall.

*Ant.* I own it.

*Ch.* Wherefore then despond?

*Ant.* I know not how we shall return to Thebes.

*Ch.* Think not of that; 'tis plunged in ills.

*Ant.* It was before; yet—  
The tide of misery ebbs and flows again.

*Ch.* Ah! ye are tossed upon a shoreless sea.

*Ant.* Shoreless indeed!

*Ch.* I know, and pity you.

*Ant.* Eternal Jove, ah whither shall we fly?  
**To what surviving hope**  
**Will Heaven direct us now?**

*Enter THESEUS.*

THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

*Thes.* Cease, oh unhappy virgins, cease your  
 plaints!  
 Ye should not weep for him, who oft invoked  
 Death, ere it came, to soothe him. 'Tis not well  
 To weep!

*Ant.* Great King, we supplicate thy grace.

*Thes.* What grace, poor maidens, would ye crave  
 from me?

*Ant.* We but implore to gaze  
 On our dear father's tomb once more.

*Thes.* It cannot be; that spot ye must not tread.

*Ant.* What hast thou said, O King! the Lord of  
 Athens?

*Thes.* Virgins, your dying father bade,  
 That none of mortal birth should e'er approach  
 That spot, or breathe funereal vows

O'er his mysterious tomb.

This charge observed with faith, he promised peace  
And glory to our realm.

The God was conscious to my vows,  
And the Infernal Jove, attesting all.

*Ant.* If such, indeed, be our lost father's will,  
Be it his daughters' too. Yet grant us now  
Safe conduct to Ogygian Thebes, if yet  
We may avert the miseries that impend  
O'er each doomed brother's head.

*Thes.* This will I do ; and all my power can reach  
To soothe and aid you, for the love  
Of him who rests late sepulchred in earth;—  
In such a task no labour will I shun.

*Ch.* But cease your sorrows, virgins, nor indulge  
This wild impassioned woe.—  
All hath been willed by Heaven's disposing hand.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*]

# ANTIGONE.



## ANTIGONE.

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IN forming our estimate of those productions of poetical genius, which have appeared in various countries and at different periods of time, it should ever be remembered, that similarity of conception and coincidence of design are totally distinct from, and unconnected with, *imitation*. The same character may indeed present itself, under the same aspect, to the contemplation of two minds, each gifted with superior powers ; but it does not necessarily follow, that the more recent writer has been contented to pursue the track of his predecessor. Though there are several striking features of resemblance between the Cordelia of Shakspeare and



the Antigone of Sophocles,—both eminent for filial piety, both summoned to evince it under the most trying circumstances, and both, instead of receiving the recompense of virtue, consigned to an early and miserable doom,—it cannot be imagined, that the Prince of the Modern Drama was indebted to his Greek precursor for that idea of female excellence, which he has so beautifully embodied in the daughter of Lear. The simple fact is, that nature is the same at every age and in every clime; and these great masters of dramatic poetry acknowledged no other guide. They knew, that prosperity is not always the reward of virtue; and that no spectacle could be at once more natural and affecting, than the sight of beauty and excellence descending prematurely to the tomb.

To us, however, who are but imperfectly acquainted with the customs of the Ancients, and disqualified from allowing them due consideration by the diversity of our own, the Greek poet must necessarily appear under very material disadvantage. The very principle on which this drama is founded possesses comparatively little interest to us; it can neither excite sympathy nor commiseration.

tion in our minds. It is difficult for us fully to comprehend ;—it is impossible for us adequately to feel ;—*why* Antigone should be required to sacrifice her own life to the mere interment of her brother's corpse. We are indeed aware, that the privation of sepulture was esteemed by the Greeks a heavier calamity than the loss of life itself,—that the surviving kindred were enjoined, by the most solemn obligations, to pay the last sad offices to their departed relative,—and that even the 'casual traveller, who should pass a dead body without sprinkling over it three handfuls of dust, subjected himself to a penalty of the most tremendous execration. But, though we *know* all this, we cannot *feel* it; and, consequently, to our minds, the great interest of the drama is irreparably lost.

These remarks are introduced—not, it is hoped, without some reference to the subject—to obviate any disappointment which might be experienced

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' ..... Precibus non linquar inultis;

Teque piacula nulla resolvent.

Quanquam festinas, non est mora longa ; licebít

Injecto ter pulvere curras.

Horat. Lib. I. Od. 28.

on the perusal of this tragedy, particularly by those whose expectations are founded on the commendations of critics, and not derived from acquaintance with the original. Yet, under all its disadvantages, it will be found highly interesting and pathetic. That the Athenians, who were the most competent judges of its excellence, and among whose national defects has never been numbered the faculty of being *easily pleased*, honoured it with peculiar approbation, may be collected from two facts;<sup>2</sup> that it was represented thirty-two times without intermission, and that they requited its author with the government of Samos.

The chorus, indeed, by their servile submission to the arbitrary commands of the Tyrant Creon, seem to deviate somewhat from the canon prescribed by Horace :

Actoris partes chorus officiumque virile  
Defendat ;

---

<sup>2</sup> The authority for this fact is the expression of the Scholiast, *Λέλειπται δὲ τὸ δράμα τοῦτο τριακοστὸν δεύτερον*: which, however, may also signify, This drama was the thirty-second in order written by Sophocles.

Ille bonis faveatque, et concilietur amicis,  
Et regat iratos, et amet peccare timentes ;  
Ille dapes laudet mensæ brevis ; ille salubrem  
Justitiam, legesque, et apertis otia portis ;  
Ille tegat commissa ; Deosque precetur et oret,  
Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis.

Horat. Ars Poet. 198–201.

But this discrepancy is so judiciously accounted for by Potter, that we cannot do better than transcribe his words. “ In the Persian war Thebes had deserted the cause of glory and of Greece, and was, besides, hostile to the Athenian state ; therefore, to this generous people, animated with resentment, conscious of their own merit, and glowing with all the enthusiasm of civil liberty, nothing could be more pleasing than a representation of their hated enemies, under the most contemptible of all circumstances, as slaves to a tyrant.”

## **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

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**ANTIGONE.**

**ISMENE.**

**CHORUS OF AGED THEBANS.**

**CREON, KING OF THEBES.**

**MESSENGERS.**

**HÆMON, SON OF CREON.**

**TIRESIAS.**

**EURYDICE, WIFE OF CREON.**

# ANTIGONE.

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ANTIGONE, ISMENE.

*Ant.* Ismene, sister of my fondest love,  
Know'st thou, of those unnumbered ills that sprung  
From our devoted father, *one* which Jove  
Heaps not on us, who now alone survive him ?  
There is no grief or suffering, nought of shame  
Or keen dishonour, which I cannot trace  
Centred in thy afflictions and mine own.  
E'en now, what new decree doth rumour blaze  
Through all the city, by the King proclaimed ?  
Know'st thou its import ? hast thou heard ? or yet

Are the fresh wrongs, designed by ruthless foes  
<sup>3</sup> Against our dearest friends, concealed from  
thee?

*Is.* No tidings of our friends, Antigone,  
Have reached me, sad or joyous, since the hour  
When of our brethren we were both bereft,  
On the same day by mutual rancour slain;  
Save that to-night the routed Argive host  
Speeds its reluctant flight; nought know I more  
To wake our hopes or aggravate our fears.

*Ant.* I knew too well; and, therefore, summoned  
thee  
Beyond the palace-gates to hear alone.

*Is.* And what? Thy words bespeak a troubled  
soul.

*Ant.* For hath not Creon, honouring with a tomb  
One of our brethren, in dishonour held  
Another not less dear? He hath entombed,  
As Fame reports, with due sepulchral rites,

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<sup>3</sup> As Polynices was the elder son of Œdipus, and, consequently, the rightful inheritor of the crown of Thebes, he had already been wronged by the opposition which was made to his ascending the throne. Hence the prohibition of Creon, that his remains should be interred, was a new and additional injury.

Eteocles, among the Gods below  
 An honourable shade. But his decree  
 Sternly enjoins the city not to grace  
 The wretched Polynices with a grave,  
 Nor o'er his relics shed the pitying tear ;  
 But leave him unlamented, unentombed,  
 † A welcome banquet to the birds of death,  
 Fierce swooping to their prey. Such things, 'tis  
     said,  
 To you and me, for I must name myself,  
 Ordains this worthy Creon, and approaches  
 Here too the same stern edict to proclaim,  
 Lest any yet plead ignorance. Nor account  
 This charge of trivial import. Death awaits  
 Him, who shall do the deed,—a public death,  
 By stoning from the people. Such is now  
 Our perilous state; and quickly must thou prove  
 Whether thy soul is noble as thy birth,  
 Or thou degenerate from thy lofty line.

---

† The common reading, *εἰσορῶσι*, rendered by Potter  
 “ whose keen eye marks their prey,” appears altogether in-  
 admissible. The emendation, which we have adopted,  
*εἰσορμῶσιν*, has been proposed and approved by the most eminent  
 commentators.



*Is.* What then, unhappy ! could I more avail,  
 ' Who cannot sanction, nor repeal the law ?

*Ant.* Reflect awhile. Wilt thou partake my toils ?

*Is.* In what emprise ? what is thy wild design ?

*Ant.* Wilt thou unite with me to bear away  
 ' The lifeless body ?

*Is.* And wilt *thou* presume  
 To give him burial, though the state forbid ?

*Ant.* He is my brother ; aye, and thine ; though  
 thou

Art thus reluctant, I will ne'er betray him.

*Is.* Too daring sister ! when the King forbids ?

*Ant.* He hath no power to hold me from mine  
 own.

*Is.* O think, dear sister ! think on our poor father ;  
 How, by a doom inglorious and abhorred,  
 He fell ;—and, maddened by detected crimes,

' The common reading, remarks Erfurdt on this passage, " λύεις ἂν ἢ θάπτῃσα," is evidently incorrect, since the opposition, which ought to exist between the two verbs, does not occur here, λύειν τον νόμον being exactly the same in signification as θάπτειν. He, therefore, proposes to read λύεσα. The reader may form his own opinion respecting this emendation, which we have contented ourselves with stating, and not ventured to adopt.

Tore out his eyes with self-avenging hand.  
Think how his wife and mother too—she bore  
That twofold name—by the suspended cord  
Her course of suffering closed. Reflect, once more,  
How in one day our hapless brothers slain,  
Each by the other's spear, received alike  
From fratricidal hands their common doom.  
We now are left unfriended and alone :  
And oh, bethink thee, how we must incur  
A doom more dark and fearful, if we dare  
To spurn by force the mandate of our tyrant.  
And weigh this also ;—nature formed us women,  
Weak and unfit to cope with mightier man ;  
Since, therefore, we are swayed by stronger lords,  
Submit we meekly, though to keener wrongs.  
First will I ask forgiveness of the dead,  
That force constrains me to obey the mighty ;  
Then bow to those who hold the sovereign sway.  
To dare a deed so far beyond our strength,  
What is it but distraction ?—

*Ant.* I forbear

To urge thee more ; nay, did thy spirit burn  
To share mine enterprise, I would not now  
Accept thine aid. Act as thy prudence guides thee.  
I will entomb him. For a deed like this,

Oh what were death but glory? I shall rest  
 Beloved with him I love, my last sad duty  
 Boldly discharged. Our latest, longest home  
 Is with the dead; and therefore would I please  
 The lifeless, not the living. I shall rest  
 For ever there; but thou, if such thy pleasure,  
 Trample in scorn on those most sacred rites,  
 Which the Gods reverence.

*Is.* Nay, I do not hold  
 Those rites in scorn; but, when the state forbids,  
 I am not framed by nature to resist.

*Ant.* Still feign such fair pretences; I will hence  
 To heap a mound o'er my beloved brother.

*Is.* Alas, my sister! how I tremble for thee.

*Ant.* Fear not for me; but look to thine own  
 safety.

*Is.* At least, to none impart thy bold design;  
 Veil it in darkness; I too will be silent.

*Ant.* Nay, but declare it; I shall hate thee more,  
 If thou forbear my purpose to divulge.

*Is.* 'Thou'rt warm; and yet methinks a deed  
 like this

---

<sup>6</sup> Θειμὴν ἐπὶ ψυχροῦ καὶ καρδίας ἔχεις; literally, you have a warm heart in a cold business. This idiomatic expression is difficult to be preserved in a translation.

Might damp thy zeal.

*Ant.* I know that those I please,  
Whom most to please becomes me.

*Is.* Couldst thou *do* it—  
It far transcends thy power.

*Ant.* I will forbear,  
Whene'er my power shall fail me.

*Is.* 'Tis unseemly  
To aim at objects which transcend thy reach.

*Ant.* Nay, if thou still persist to answer thus,  
I cannot choose but hate thee ; and thy words  
Will make thee no less hateful to the dead.  
Leave me, and my presumption, as thou deem'st it,  
To dare the menaced evil. I can suffer  
No heavier penalty than not to die  
An honourable death.

*Is.* If such thy purpose,  
Go ; void of prudence do I deem the deed,  
Though fond and faithful to the friends thou lovest.

[*Exeunt* ANTIGONE and ISMENE.]

*Chorus.*

## STROPHE I.

Beam of the sun ! the brightest ray  
That ever shot from yon blue heaven,  
To gild our stately portals seven ;  
Eye of the golden day !  
At length thine orient splendours glancing  
O'er Dirce's hallowed stream are dancing,  
Urging to swifter, wilder flight  
The chief with argent buckler bright ;  
Who, from proud Argos' distant towers,  
Led to our land his martial powers,  
And to the dubious field of fame  
With vengeful Polynices came.  
As the swift eagle spreads her snow-white wing,  
And downward swoops impetuous to the strand ;  
So, with reverberant arms, and casques that fling  
Their floating crests in air, he led the Argive  
band.

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<sup>7</sup> Adrastus, King of Argos, and father-in-law of Polynices.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

High o'er our towers the chieftain stood,  
 With spears in carnage deeply dyed,  
 Circling our portals in his pride ;—  
 But ere in Theban blood  
 His wrath was quenched, ere flames were curling  
 Around the destined turrets furling ;  
 In swift retreat, dismayed he fled ;—  
 Such wild alarm and withering dread  
 Full on his rear our troops impelled,  
<sup>8</sup> And all his dragon-frenzy quelled.  
 For Jove, with just abhorrence fired,  
 Hears lofty vaunts by pride inspired ;  
 He marked, as onward rushed the adverse powers,  
     Radiant with gold, with armour's echoing clang,  
 And hurled the brandished bolt, as to our towers,  
     With conquest's maddening shout, th' infuriate  
         boaster sprang.

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<sup>8</sup> Ἀτίπαλον δυσχέρημα δράκοντι. The exact signification of the word *δυσχέρημα* has excited some discussion. It denotes properly, "res ægre superabilis." *Δράκοντι* is applied by most commentators to the Thebans. There is, however, no necessity for such an application, as the expression may be used, in a general sense, to denote the violent hostility

## STROPHE II.

'Armed with devouring flames, at once he fell  
 A blackening corpse to earth, whose rancour past  
 Swift as the winged blast  
 When rising whirlwinds darkly swell.  
 But other ills befel ;—  
 For mighty Mars the storm of battle guided,  
 And still to each his doom divided.  
 At the seven gates, seven chiefs of martial might,  
 With seven bold Thebans matched in equal fight,  
 Left their bright spoils to grace Tropæan Jove ;  
 Save that devoted pair—who, from one sire,  
 One guilty mother sprung—in mortal ire  
 With ruthless spears in stern encounter strove,  
 Victorious each, and doomed an equal fate to prove.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

But Conquest comes, with noblest names renowned,  
 To grace her Thebes, whose sons control the car ;

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of the Argives against the Thebans. The word *bellua*  
 occurs among Latin authors in a similar sense.

' Capaneus, struck down by a thunderbolt, while attempt-  
 ing to scale the walls.

Now be the woes of war  
Henceforth in glad oblivion drowned,  
And let each fane resound  
With joyous vigils, Bacchus first adoring,  
To Bacchus first the glad strain pouring.—  
But lo! the King whose rule we now revere,  
Menceceus' late-crowned son, advances here ;  
Raised to imperial sway by favouring Fate ;—  
Now weighty cares seem labouring in his breast,  
And hence I deem the Monarch's high behest  
Bade the swift heralds summon to debate  
This chosen conclave,—these, the sages of the state.

*Enter CREON.*

CREON, CHORUS.

*Cr.* Thebans, the Gods, who willed our struggling  
state

To be the sport of many an adverse wave,  
Once more have reared it vigorous from the storm.  
I sent the heralds to convene you here,  
Apart from all, for well I ever knew  
Your firm allegiance to the house of Laius ;



While Œdipus bore sway, ye nobly proved it ;  
And on the wreck of all his prouder fortunes  
Firm were ye still, and loyal to his sons.

Since in one day they met an equal doom,  
By mutual hate destroying and destroyed,  
On me devolve the sceptre and the sway,  
As to the dead by nearest ties allied.

Vain were the task to trace man's secret soul,  
The latent thoughts and judgements of his mind,  
Till proved by empire—practised in the laws.  
For me, the man who guides the helm of state,  
Nor to the sagest counsels firmly cleaves,  
But curbs the natural current of his thoughts,  
By servile fear constrained ; such do I deem,  
Such ever deemed, most worthless. Lightly, too,  
That man I value, who regards his friend  
Beyond his country's welfare. For myself ;—  
All-seeing Jove attest my stainless truth !—

I will not tamely and in silence mark  
Peril and ruin o'er the state impend,  
In place of safety ; never will I deem  
That man my friend who is my country's foe.  
Experience tells me, on the state alone  
Our weal depends ; and while in steady course  
Her bark is steered, we cannot fail of friends.

By rules like these will I exalt the city ;  
And now, with these concurring, this decree  
Have I proclaimed to all our citizens,  
Touching the sons of Œdipus. We will  
To lay the youth, who in his country's cause  
Died nobly fighting, first by valorous deeds  
Ennobled, in an honourable tomb,  
With all sepulchral splendours, which are wont  
To grace the mighty dead. But for his brother—  
I speak of Polynices—who, returned  
To his paternal realms and Patron-Gods  
From distant exile, panted to subvert  
His native city with devouring flame ;—  
To sate his vengeful thirst with Theban blood,  
And bear his captive countrymen to bondage ;—  
We will that none commit him to the tomb  
With hallowed rites, or mourn above his bier,  
But leave his corpse unburied ; let the dogs  
And wild birds batten on his loathed remains.  
Such is our will ; for never shall the base  
Receive from me like reverence with the virtuous ;  
But the good man, who seeks my country's welfare,  
In life or death, shall ever win from me  
Unvarying honour due.

*Ch.* If such thy pleasure,  
Son of Menceceus, towards the ruthless foe  
And gallant friend of Thebes ; enforce the law  
Thy kingly mandate sanctions, on the dead,  
As on ourselves, whoe'er are living still.

*Cr.* Ye then attend to see our will obeyed.

*Ch.* A task like this befits more vigorous youth.

*Cr.* Guards are already set to watch the dead.

*Ch.* What more than this wouldst thou command ?

*Cr.* That ye  
Concede no grace to those who dare transgress.

*Ch.* Who is so senseless as to long for death ?

*Cr.* Aye, death shall be the meed ; but men too oft  
By hope of treacherous gain are lured to ruin.

*Enter MESSENGER.*

CREON, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

*Mess.* I dare not say, my Lord ! with breathless  
speed  
And hurried step I sought thy royal presence,  
For ponderings of dark presage long detained me,  
And oft I turned as to retrace my path,

Long unresolved—for various were the pleas  
My soul suggested;—"Wherefore dost thou speed,  
Unhappy man! where woe and wrath await thee?  
Yet what avails to linger? Should the King  
Learn thine unwelcome errand from another,  
How wouldst thou rue thy rashness!" Musing thus,  
I came with steps irresolute and slow.

Thus a short path becomes a lengthened way.  
At length my final sentence here impelled me;  
And, though mine errand gall thee, I must speak.  
I come confiding in this only hope,  
Nought can I suffer more than Heaven ordains.

*Cr.* And what excites this strange solicitude?

*Mess.* First of myself indulge a brief remark.  
Nor have I done the deed, nor can I tell  
Who did it; vengeance therefore on my head  
Would fall unjustly.

*Cr.* Well dost thou evade,  
And raise a cautious rampart round thy cause;  
Thine errand seems of something new and strange.

*Mess.* Unwonted perils wake unusual fear.

*Cr.* Wilt thou not speak, and hie thee hence  
absolved?

*Mess.* Now, then, I speak. Some one hath just  
interred

The corpse, and fled ; first sprinkling o'er the dead  
The loose dry dust, all decent rites discharged.

*Cr.* Ha ! sayst thou so ? Who, then, hath done  
the deed ?

*Mess.* I know not ;—not a stroke of axe was there,  
Nor mark of delving spade ; the earth around  
Was solid and unbroken, and by track  
Of wheel unfurrowed ; not a trace betrayed  
The viewless workman. When the earliest watch  
Of morn revealed it, it awoke in all  
A sad astonishment. No mound was raised,  
And yet the corpse had vanished ; the light dust  
Was sprinkled o'er it, as by one who shunned  
Pollution from the dead. No track appeared  
Of beast or ravening dog, who might have torn  
The lifeless relics for his bloody fare.  
Then rose the interchange of keen reproach,  
Guard criminating guard. Nay, had the strife  
Increased to mortal rancour, none was there  
To quell the rising madness. Each accused  
His fellow of the deed, yet visible guilt  
Attached to none, and each repelled the charge.  
<sup>10</sup> We stood prepared to lift the glowing mass

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<sup>10</sup> This singular allusion proves the antiquity of the trial by ordeal, so prevalent in the monkish ages.

Of heated metal, through the living flame  
 To pass, and call to witness the great Gods,  
 That all were most unconscious of the deed,  
 Unknowing who devised or who performed it.  
 At last, when all our scrutiny was vain,  
 One spake, whose sentence bowed us to the earth  
 With wild o'ermastering terror, for we could not  
 Refute his reasoning, nor devise a scheme  
 Less fraught with peril :—thus its purport ran :  
 That this bold deed be straight disclosed to thee ;  
 It could not be concealed. His voice prevailed ;  
 The lots were cast ; on me, alas ! it fell,  
 To bear these '*welcome* tidings. I am come  
 Unwilling herald to reluctant hearers ;—  
 None greet with joy the messenger of ill.

*Ch.* O King ! already have my thoughts ascribed  
 This strange event to interposing Gods.

*Cr.* Cease, ere mine anger kindle at thy words ;—  
 Lest thou be found at once unwise and aged.  
 Who can endure thy babbling, when thou sayst

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<sup>1</sup> Spoken ironically. The expression in the original is *τοῦτο ταραθὲν*, which might be accurately rendered by “ this precious intelligence,” a phrase evidently altogether inadmissible into tragic poetry.

The Gods revere a wretch accursed as this ?  
Would they entomb with honourable rites,  
As of such meed deserving, one who came  
To fire their columned fanes and costly shrines,  
Their land to ravage, and subvert their laws ?  
Seest thou the Gods requiting guilt with glory ?  
It is not thus. A rebel faction lurks  
Within the state, who murmur at our sway,  
Muttering their spleen in secret, and disdain  
To stoop the lofty crest beneath our yoke  
In due submission. They, I know full well  
By fraudulent arts of bribery have suborned  
Their hirelings to the deed. Ne'er sprung device  
So fraught with evils to mankind as gold.  
This lays imperial cities in the dust;—  
Drives men to exile from their native land ;—  
'Tis this instructs and turns the generous soul  
From honour's onward road to deeds of baseness;—  
This paves a path to artifice and fraud,  
And every nameless ill that shames mankind.  
But they, whom lucre to the deed hath led,  
Have sealed their doom, and shall endure the death ;  
And oh ! if yet I fear th' Eternal Jove,  
Be well assured, for by His name I swear,  
Unless ye find, and bring before our presence,

The authors of this outrage, death alone  
Shall not suffice for vengeance ; ye shall hang  
Alive, till ye reveal th' atrocious wrong,  
That, well apprised whence profit should arise,  
Ye may hereafter seek it there, and learn,  
That not from every source may gain accrue.  
Far more by lawless lucre wilt thou mark  
Consigned to ruin, than from ill preserved.

*Mess.* May I now speak, or must I thus depart ?

*Cr.* Know'st thou not yet how odious are thy words ?

*Mess.* Harsh to thine ear, or hateful to thy soul ?

*Cr.* Why dost thou scan the nature of my pain ?

*Mess.* The author of the deed hath galled thy soul ;  
I but offend thine ear.

*Cr.* Wretch ! thou wert born  
A most inveterate babbler.

*Mess.* Of this deed,  
At least, I am not guilty.

*Cr.* Thou hast bartered  
Thy life for worthless gold.

*Mess.* Alas ! how keenly  
Suspensions, though unfounded, wound the guiltless.

*Cr.* Aye, prate upon suspicion ; but unless  
Ye find the criminal, soon shall ye own  
On lawless gain a fearful vengeance waits.



Or not, (for this must fate alone decide,) ,  
No more shalt thou behold me here return ;  
And now, preserved beyond or hope or thought, -  
I owe glad praises to protecting Heaven.

***Chorus.***

Mid nature's countless wonders none is found  
More marvellous than MAN ! O'er the white wave  
He speeds his daring course, while foam around  
The swelling surges, and loud whirlwinds rave,  
Fearless the billows and the blast to brave.  
Man, year by year, the labouring steed constrains  
To urge the rolling plough, a docile slave,  
O'er Earth, Supreme of Gods ;—whose teeming veins  
Nor countless years exhaust, nor ceaseless labour  
drains.

The feathered tribes that cut the yielding air,  
The wilder race who prowl the pathless wood,  
Alike can man's inventive skill ensnare

In fine-wove toils ; nor less the watery brood  
 Who sport secure in ocean's trackless flood.  
 Man, by superior art, can curb and chain  
 The brute, wild ranging o'er the mountains rude ;  
 The haughty steed elate with flowing mane,  
 And the fierce mountain-bull beneath his yoke  
 restrain.

STROPHE II.

The might of eloquence he taught,  
 The rapid train of counselled thought,  
 The social ties that link mankind ;—  
 He taught the sheltering roof to form,  
 And from the “<sup>2</sup>arrows of the storm”  
 A safe asylum find.  
 Skilful in all things, no surprise  
 Finds him unwarned or unprepared ;—  
 One art alone his skill defies,  
 The shaft of death to ward :  
 Though man for many a woe hath found  
 Relief, and balm for many a wound.

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<sup>2</sup> Δύσομβρα φεῦγε βίλη. Sophocles terms hail “ the arrows of the storm.” Milton (and after him Gray) has inverted the metaphor, and termed thick flying arrows “ sleet of arrowy shower.”—Potter.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Unfettered springs his active mind  
High o'er the range by Hope assigned ;  
To virtue soars, or sinks to shame ;  
Him who the sacred laws reveres,  
And Heaven's avenging justice fears,  
His country crowns with fame;—  
But instant from her breast be driven  
The wretch accursed, whose guilty soul,  
From impious deeds, nor fear of Heaven  
Nor earthly laws control.  
Far from my hearth let such remove,  
Nor share my counsel and my love.

Ha ! what new wonders burst upon my sight ?  
How—known too well—can I deny  
This is the young Antigone ?—  
Oh, thou unhappy child  
Of an unhappy father ! wherefore thus ?—  
Why do they drag thee here ?—  
Not as a rebel to the royal laws,  
And in thy rashness seized ?—

*ANTIGONE is brought in by the MESSENGER.*

CHORUS, MESSENGER, ANTIGONE.

*Mess.* This is the daring author of the deed.  
We seized her in the act of sepulture—  
But where is Creon?

*Ch.* At thy need again,  
From out the palace, lo! the Monarch comes.

*Enter CREON.*

CREON, MESSENGER, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

*Cr.* What make ye here? What timely chance  
hath fallen?

*Mess.* Nought, O my Lord, should man by oath  
forswear,

Lest calmer thought confute the rash resolve.  
I vowed, by thy stern menaces appalled,  
Long should it be ere hither I returned;  
But joy is doubly sweet, when hope itself  
Hath ceased to look for gladness. I am come,—  
Though bound by strongest oath to come no more,—  
Leading this virgin, whom we found in act  
The body to entomb. In this, at least,

No lot was thrown ; the unexpected prize  
Is all mine own. Now, Monarch, at thy will  
Receive—convict—condemn the conscious maid.—  
Approve mine innocence, and send me hence  
Acquitted and absolved.

*Cr.* Whence bring'st thou her,  
And wherefore ?—Speak.

*Mess.* She hath interred the dead ;  
Thou hear'st the whole.

*Cr.* And art thou well assured  
Of thine assertion ? Canst thou prove the charge ?

*Mess.* I saw her hand entomb the corpse, by thee  
Denied a grave. Speak I not plainly now ?

*Cr.* How didst thou see her ?—where detect and  
seize her ?

*Mess.* I will recount the whole. Soon as we  
reached

The spot, by thine indignant threats appalled,  
From the pale corpse we swept the covering dust,  
Laid bare the putrid relics, and sate down  
Upon a loftier mound, in the free air,  
To shun the fetid odours of the corpse.

While each his comrade urged with keen reproach,  
Denounced on him who first shrunk back from toil.  
Thus rolled the hours, till now the noon-day sun

In the mid arch of Heaven resplendent flamed,  
And the full rays beat fiercely on our heads ;  
When sudden from the earth a whirlwind rose—  
Troubled the clear blue sky, o'er the far plain  
Impetuous swept, and of their foliage dense  
The waving woods divested. The hot air  
Was choked with dusty clouds, and we, with eyes  
Deep-closed, this Heaven-inflicted pest endured.  
The blast at length subsided. Then we saw  
This maid, who wailed with loud and bitter cry,  
As the poor bird, that hastens to her young,  
And finds her nest deserted,—thus the virgin,  
Soon as uncovered she discerned the corpse,  
Redoubled her shrill wailings, and invoked  
Dire imprecations on the heads of all  
Who wrought this sacrilege. Then in her hands  
She brought the light dry dust, and from a vase  
With nicest art ensculptured, on the dead  
Poured due libations trine. We at the sight  
Rushed onward and secured her—nought appalled ;  
Then straightly taxed her with the former deed,  
As with the present ; she confessed the whole.  
Welcome, yet painful, was her frank avowal.  
To shun impending evil is most welcome ;

Painful to work the woe of those we honour.  
Yet all regrets are fruitless, and must yield  
To mine own preservation.

*Cr.* Answer thou,  
Bending thy head to earth,—dost thou confess,  
Or canst deny the charge?

*Ant.* I do confess it  
Freely ; I scorn to disavow the act.

*Cr.* *Thou*, from the threatened penalty absolved,  
[*To MESSENGER.*  
Go where thou wilt, acquitted. But for *thee*,  
[*To ANTIGONE.*

Reply with answer brief to one plain question,  
Without evasion. Didst thou know the law,  
That none should do this deed ?

*Ant.* I knew it well ;  
How could I fail to know, it was most plain.

*Cr.* Didst thou then dare transgress our royal  
mandate ?

*Ant.* Ne'er did eternal Jove such laws ordain,  
Or Justice, throned amid th' Infernal Powers,  
Who on mankind these holier rites imposed ;—  
Nor can I deem thine edict armed with power  
To contravene the firm unwritten laws

Of the just Gods, thyself a weak frail mortal !  
These are no laws of yesterday,—they live  
For evermore, and none can trace their birth.  
I would not dare, by mortal threat appalled,  
To violate their sanction, and incur  
The vengeance of the Gods. I knew before  
That I must die, though thou hadst ne'er pro-  
claimed it;

And if I perish ere th' allotted term,  
I deem that death a blessing. Who that lives,  
Like me, encompassed by unnumbered ills,  
But would account it blessedness to die ?  
If then I meet the doom thy laws assign,  
It nothing grieves me. Had I left my brother,  
From mine own mother sprung, on the bare earth  
To lie unburied, *that* indeed might grieve me ;  
But for this deed I mourn not. If to thee  
Mine actions seem unwise, 'tis thine own soul  
That errs from wisdom when it deems me senseless.

*Ch.* This maiden shares her father's stubborn soul  
And scorns to bend beneath misfortune's power.

*Cr.* Yet thou mightst know, that loftiest spirits  
oft  
Are bowed to deepest shame ; and thou mightst mark  
The hardest metal soft and ductile made



By the resistless energy of flame ;  
Oft, too, the fiery courser have I seen  
By a small bit constrained. High arrogant thoughts  
Beseem not one, whose duty is submission.  
In this presumption she was lessoned first,  
When our imperial laws she dared to spurn,  
And to that insolent wrong fresh insult adds,  
In that she glories vaunting in the deed.  
Henceforth no more deem mine a manly soul ;—  
Concede that name to hers, if from this crime  
She shall escape unpunished. Though she spring  
From our own sister ;—were she sprung from one  
<sup>3</sup> Dearer than all whom Hercian Jove defends,  
She and her sister shall not now evade  
A shameful death ; for I accuse her, too,  
And deem her privy to these lawless rites.  
Hence, call her hither ; late within I marked  
Her frenzied ravings and distempered mood.  
The mind that broods in darkness o'er its guilt  
By starts of frenzy is betrayed to light.  
I hate the wretch, who, when convicted, strives

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<sup>3</sup> In the original, from one more near of blood than all under the protection of Hercian Jove. This Jupiter was the guardian of the house, in the court of which his altar stood.

To veil detected guilt in honour's garb.

*Ant.* And wouldst thou aught beyond my death?

*Cr.* No more ;

'Tis all I seek.

*Ant.* Then wherefore dost thou pause?—

For all thy words are hateful to mine ear,  
And ever will be hateful ; nor my speech  
To thee is less unwelcome. Whence could I  
Obtain a holier praise, than by committing  
My brother to the tomb ? These, too, I knew,  
Would all approve the action, but that fear  
Curbs their free thoughts to base and servile silence.  
But 'tis the noble privilege of tyrants  
To say and do whate'er their lordly will,  
Their only law, may prompt.

*Cr.* Of all the Thebans,  
Dost thou alone see this ?

*Ant.* They too behold it ;  
But fear constrains them to an abject silence.

*Cr.* Doth it not shame thee to dissent from these?

*Ant.* I cannot think it shame to love my brother.

*Cr.* Was not he too, who died for Thebes, thy  
brother ?

*Ant.* He was ; and of the self-same parents born.

*Cr.* Why then dishonour him to grace the guilty ?

*Ant.* The dead entombed will not attest thy words.

*Cr.* Yes; if thou honour with an equal doom  
That impious wretch—

*Ant.* He did not fall a slave;  
He was my brother.

*Cr.* Yet he wronged his country;  
The other fought undaunted in her cause.

*Ant.* Still. Death at least demands an equal law.

*Cr.* Ne'er should the base be honoured like the  
noble.

*Ant.* Who knows, if this be holy in the shades?

*Cr.* Death cannot change a foe into a friend.

*Ant.* My nature tends to mutual love, not hatred.

*Cr.* Then to the grave, and love them, if thou  
must ;—

But while I live, no woman shall bear sway.

*Ch.* Lo ! at the portal fair Ismene stands,  
Dissolved in tears at her loved sister's peril.  
The cloud of heartfelt sorrow lowers  
O'er her dejected brow,  
And dims the radiance of her loveliness.

*ISMENE is brought in.*

CREON, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

*Cr.* O thou false viper! stealing through my house  
To prey upon my vitals; till this hour  
I knew not I had nurtured two such furies,  
Leagued to subvert my throne. Approach, and  
tell me,—

Art thou accomplice in this venturous deed,  
Or wilt thou swear thine innocence of the charge?

*Is.* The deed, so she deny not, I have shared.  
I shared the crime, and will partake the vengeance.

*Ant.* Such an assertion justice will disclaim;  
Nor wouldst thou give, nor I accept thine aid.

*Is.* Yet in this deep extremity of woe,  
I do not blush to share thy destiny.

*Ant.* Whose deed is this, let Hell's dark Powers  
attest;

I value not a friend who loves in words.

*Is.* Ah! do not—do not spurn me thus, my sister;  
Let me partake thy doom; and thus in death  
Revere my brother.

*Ant.* No; die not with me,  
Nor claim a deed thou didst not; 'tis enough  
That I must perish.

*Is.* Yet, bereft of thee,

What still hath life to charm me ?

*Ant.* Ask thy Creon ;

Thou court'st his royal favour.

*Is.* Wherefore thus

Wound me, dear sister, when it nought avails thee ?

*Ant.* I mourn, although I mock thee.

*Is.* Is there nought

In which I yet may aid thee ?

*Ant.* Save thyself ;

I do not envy thine escape.

*Is.* Ah me !

Am I forbidden e'en to share thy doom ?

*Ant.* It was thy choice to live ;—'tis mine to die.

*Is.* Alas ! thou 'dost not fall unwarned by me.

*Ant.* Thy words to thee seemed weighty ; I esteemed it

True wisdom thus to act.

*Is.* And yet our share

Is equal in this crime.

*Ant.* Be of good cheer—

Thou yet mayst live ;—my life hath long been vowed  
To reverence thus the dead.

*Cr.* Of these two maidens,

The one hath gone distracted, and the other  
Was born an idiot.

*Is.* Oh, my Lord ! the mind,  
Is bowed by misery from its native strength,  
And changed to utter weakness.

*Cr.* Such was thine,  
When thou wert aiding in a deed like this.

*Is.* What charm hath life's bleak solitude for me,  
If I must lose my sister ?

*Cr.* Name her not ;  
She hath ALREADY perished.

*Is.* Wilt thou slay  
Thy son's affianced bride ?

*Cr.* Aye ; for a race  
May spring from other nuptials.

*Is.* None ; at least,  
So dear to him and her.

*Cr.* I scorn to wed  
My son to a base woman.

*Is.* Dearest Hæmon !  
How doth thy father pour contempt on thee.

*Cr.* Thou and thy nuptials are to me most hateful.

*Is.* Wilt thou then rob thy Hæmon of his bride ?

*Cr.* Death shall ere long dissolve these hated  
nuptials.

*Is.* Alas ! it seems the stern decree is fixed ;  
And she must perish.

*Cr.* So must thou, and I.

Quick, slaves!—delay no longer—lead them in.  
It ill beseems that maidens thus should roam  
At large ; and e'en the boldest will recede,  
When they discern the swift approach of Death.

[*Exeunt ANTIGONE and ISMENE, guarded.*]

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

What blessedness is theirs, whose earthly date  
Glides unembittered by the taste of woe !  
But when a house is struck by angry Fate,  
Through all its line what ceaseless miseries flow !  
As when from Thrace rude whirlwinds sweep,  
And in thick darkness wrap the yawning deep,  
Conflicting surges on the strand  
Dash the black mass of boiling sand  
Rolled from the deep abyss ;—the rocky shore,  
Struck by the swollen tide, reverberates the roar.

ANTISTROPHE I.

I see the ancient miseries of thy race,  
O Labdacus ! arising from the dead

With fresh despair ; nor sires from sons efface  
The curse some angry Power hath rivetted  
For ever on thy destined line !  
Once more a cheering radiance seemed to shine  
O'er the last relic of thy name ;—  
This, too, the Powers of Darkness claim,  
Cut off by Hell's keen scythe, combined  
With haughty words unwise, and frenzy of the mind.

## STROPHE II.

Can mortal arrogance restrain  
Thy matchless might, Imperial Jove !  
Which all-subduing sleep assaults in vain,  
And months celestial, as they move  
In never-wearied train ;—  
Spurning the power of age, enthroned in might,  
Thou dwell'st mid Heaven's broad light.  
This was, in ages past, thy firm decree,  
Is now, and must for ever be ;  
That none of mortal race on earth shall know,  
A life of joy serene, a course unmarked by woe.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Hope beams with ever-varying ray ;  
Now fraught with blessings to mankind,



Now with vain dreams that lure but to betray ;—  
And man pursues, with ardour blind,  
Her still deluding way,  
Till on the latent flame he treads dismayed.  
Wisely the Sage hath said,  
And time hath proved his truth, that when by  
Heaven  
To woe Man's darkened soul is driven,  
Evil seems good to his distorted mind,  
Till soon he meets and mourns the doom by Fate  
assigned.

But lo ! the youngest of thy sons,  
Hæmon advances—comes he wrung with grief  
For the impending doom  
Of his fair plighted bride, Antigone,  
And mourning much his blasted nuptial joys?—

*Enter HÆMON.*

HÆMON, CREON, CHORUS:

*Cr.* We soon shall need no prophet to inform us.—  
Hearing our doom irrevocably past  
On thy once-destined bride, com'st thou, my son,  
Incensed against thy father? Or, thus acting,

Still do we share thy reverence ?

*Hæ.* I am thine ;  
And thou, my father, dost direct my youth  
By prudent counsels, which shall ever guide me ;  
Nor any nuptials can with me outweigh  
A father's just command.

*Cr.* 'Tis well, my son.  
A mind like this befits thee, to esteem  
All else subservient to a father's will.  
Hence 'tis the prayer, the blessing of mankind,  
To nourish in their homes a duteous race,  
\*Who on their foes may well requite their wrongs,  
And, as their father, honour friends sincere.  
But he who to a mean and dastard race  
Gives life, engenders to himself regret,  
And much derision to his taunting foes.  
Then do not thou, my son, by love betrayed,  
Debase thy generous nature for a woman ;  
But think how joyless is the cold embrace  
Of an unworthy consort. Is there wound

---

\* Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant, even so are young children. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them, they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.—Ps. cxxvii. 5, 6.

Which galls more keenly than a faithless friend ?  
Spurn, then, this maiden, as a foe abhorred,  
To seek in Hell a more congenial bridegroom.  
Since her have I convicted;—her alone  
Of all the city daring to rebel,  
My people shall not brand their King a liar !  
She dies ! And let her now invoke her Jove,  
Who guards the rights of kindred. If I brook  
Rebellion thus from those allied by blood,  
How strong a plea may strangers justly urge !  
He who upholds the honour of his house,  
By strict, impartial justice, will be proved  
True to the public weal. Nor can I doubt  
The man who governs well, yet knows no less  
To render due obedience, will be found  
A just and firm confederate in the storm  
Of peril and of war. Who dares presume  
With insolent pride to trample on the laws,  
Shall never win from me the meed of praise.  
He whom the state elects should be obeyed  
In all his mandates, trivial though they seem,  
Or just or unjust. Of all human ills,  
None is more fraught with woes than anarchy ;  
It lays proud states in ruin, it subverts  
Contending households, 'mid the battle strife

---

Scatters the serried ranks, while to the wise,  
Who promptly yield, obedience brings success.  
Still, then, by monarchs this should be maintained,  
Nor e'er surrendered to a woman's will.

'Tis better far, if we must fall, to fall  
By man, than thus be branded the weak prey,  
The abject prey, of female conquerors.

*Ch.* To us, unless our soul be dull with age,  
Thy words, O King, seem well and wisely urged.

*Hæ.* The Gods, my father, have on man bestowed  
Their noblest treasure—Reason. To affirm,  
That in thy words from prudence thou hast  
swerved,

Nor power have I, nor knowledge to maintain.  
Such task were meeter from a stranger's lips.  
'Tis mine to guard thine interests ;—to explore  
How each may think, and act, and vent on thee  
His cutting censure. Thine indignant eye  
Appals the people, when their uttered thoughts  
Might haply wound thine ear. But to observe  
These darkly-whispered murmurs is my office.

“ How the whole state laments this hapless maid,  
“ Of all her sex least worthy of such doom  
“ As waits her now for deeds most truly noble ;  
“ Who could not brook to leave her brother, slain

“ In fight, without a tomb, nor cast his corpse

“ A prey to ravening dogs and birds obscene.

“ Doth she not merit glory's brightest meed?”

Such is the general sentence. . O my father,

No treasure can be dearer to thy son,

Than thine own prosperous honours. What reflects

Such pride on children as a generous sire,

Such joy on parents as a noble offspring?

O, then, indulge not thou this mood alone,

To deem no reasoning cogent save thine own;

For he who vaunts himself supremely skilled

In speech and judgement o'er his fellow men,

When weighed in wisdom's balance, is found  
wanting.

It cannot shame a mortal, though most wise,

To learn much from experience, and in much

Submit. Thou seest the pliant trees, that bow

Beneath the rushing torrent, rise unstripped;

But all that stem erect its onward course,

Uprooted fall and perish. So the pilot,

Who with full sail meets strong-opposing blasts,

O'ersets his bark, and on the shivered planks

Floats on the random wave. Pause — quell thy  
wrath—

Unbend to softer feelings. If one ray

*Ch.* If he hath spoken wisely, my good Lord,  
'Tis fit to weigh his reasoning. . Thou, too, youth,  
[*To HÆMON.*

***Cr.* And must we stoop, in this our cooler age,  
Thus to be lessoned by a beardless boy?**

*Hæ.* Not stoop to learn injustice. I am young.  
But thou shouldst weigh mine actions, not my years.

***Cr.* Thou deem'st it justice, then, to favour rebels ?**

*Hæ.* Ne'er would I ask thy favour for the guilty.

***Cr.* Is not this maiden stained with manifest guilt?**

*Hæ.* The general voice of Thebes repels the charge.

***Cr.* Shall then the city dictate laws to me?**

*Hæ.* Do not thy words betray a very youth?

***Cr.* Should I or should another sway the state?**

*Hæ.* That is no state, which crouches to one  
despot !

***Cr.* Is not a monarch master of his state ?**

*Hæ.* How nobly wouldst thou lord it o'er a desert !

*Cr.* Behold, I pray you, how this doughty warrior  
Strives in a woman's cause.

*Hæ.* Art *thou* a woman ?  
I strive for none, save thee.

*Cr.* Oh thou most vile !  
Wouldst thou withstand thy father ?

*Hæ.* When I see  
My father swerve from justice.

*Cr.* Do I err,  
Revering mine own laws ?

*Hæ.* Dost thou revere them,  
When thou wouldst trample on the laws of Heaven ?

*Cr.* O thou degenerate wretch ! thou woman's  
slave !

*Hæ.* Ne'er shalt thou find me the vile slave of  
baseness.

*Cr.* Still, as it seems, his words are all for her.

*Hæ.* For thee, for me, and for th' Infernal Gods.

*Cr.* Thou ne'er shalt wed her living.

*Hæ.* If she die,  
Her death shall crush another.

*Cr.* Daring villain !  
Dost thou proceed to threats ?

*Hæ.* And does he threat,  
Who but refutes vain counsels ?

*Cr.* At thy cost  
Shalt thou reprove me, void thyself of sense.

*Hæ.* Now, but thou art my father, I would say  
That thou art most unwise.

*Cr.* Hence, woman's slave !  
And prate no more to me.

*Hæ.* Wouldst thou then speak  
Whate'er thou list, and not endure reply ?

*Cr.* Aye, is it true ? Then, by Olympian  
Jove,  
I swear thou shalt not beard me thus unpunished !  
Ho ! bring that hated thing, that she may die,  
E'en in the presence of her doting bridegroom.

*Hæ.* Believe it not. Before mine eyes, at least,  
She shall not die, nor thou such dream indulge ;  
I quit thy sight for ever. They who list  
May stand the tame spectators of thy madness.

[*Exit HÆMON.*

CREON, CHORUS.

*Ch.* The youth has passed, my Lord, in desperate  
wrath.



A soul like his may rush from rankling grief  
To deeds of frenzy.

*Cr.* Let him do, and dare  
Beyond the power of man, he shall not save  
These virgins from the death.

*Ch.* Dost thou then purpose  
An equal doom for both ?

*Cr.* No ; not for her  
Who hath not touched the corpse. Thy words  
are just.

*Ch.* What death dost thou design her ?

*Cr.* To a spot  
By mortal foot untrodden, will I lead her ;  
And deep immure her in a rocky cave,  
Leaving enough of sustenance to provide  
A due atonement, that the state may shun  
Pollution from her death. There let her call  
On gloomy Hades, the sole Power she owns,  
To shield her from her doom ; or learn, though late,  
At least this lesson ; 'tis a bootless task  
To render homage to the Powers of Hell.

*Chorus.*

## STROPHE.

Love! unsubdued, unconquerable Love!  
 On wealth descending;<sup>5</sup>—whose repose  
 Is in the virgin's cheeks of rose;—  
 Alike o'er trackless ocean dost thou rove,  
 Or 'mid the lowly dwellings of the grove.  
 None of th' Immortals throned on high,  
 From thy pervading power can fly;  
 Nor man, frail being of a fleeting day!  
 The heart that feels thee yields to frenzy's sway.

## ANTISTROPHE.

Thy spells delusive turn the just aside  
 To baseness—and attendant shame;  
 Thine arts this mortal strife inflame  
 In men, by nature's dearest ties allied.  
 From the soft glances of his lovely bride

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<sup>5</sup> “On wealth descending.” In the original, ὅς ἐπὶ κτήμασι  
 τίσται, the true signification of which has tortured and ex-  
 hausted the ingenuity of the commentators.

Revealed, desire subdues his soul ;  
 Desire, usurping high control  
 O'er Heaven's primordial laws ; matchless in might  
 'In sport like this fair Venus takes delight.

[ANTIGONE *is brought in guarded.*

I, too, beyond controlling laws  
 Am hurried ; for I cannot check  
 The gushing tears, as I behold  
 Antigone thus borne away  
 To share our common couch, the joyless tomb.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

*Ant.* Behold me, Princes of my native land !  
 Treading the last sad path,  
 And gazing on the latest beam  
 Of yon resplendent sun—  
 To gaze no more for ever ! The stern hand

<sup>6</sup> Sic visum Veneri ; cui placet impares  
 Formas atque animos sub juga ahenea  
 Sævo mittere cum joco.—Hor. Lib. I. Od. 33.

Of all-entombing Death  
Impels me—living still—  
To Acheron's bleak shore—ungraced  
By nuptial rites ;—no hymeneal strain  
Hath hymned my hour of bliss,  
And joyless Death will be my bridegroom now.

*Ch.* Therefore, with endless praise renowned,  
To those drear regions wilt thou pass ;  
Unwasted aught by slow disease,  
Unwounded by avenging sword.  
Spontaneous, living, sole of mortal birth,  
Shalt thou to Death descend.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Ant.* Yes ! I have heard by how severe a doom  
The Phrygian stranger died  
On Sipylus' bleak brow sublime ;  
Whom, in its cold embrace,  
The creeping rock, like wreathing ivy, strained.  
Her, in chill dews dissolved,  
As antique legends tell,  
Ne'er do th' exhaustless snows desert,  
Nor from her eyes do trickling torrents cease  
To gush. A doom like her's,  
Alas, how like ! hath fate reserved for me.

*Ch.* A Goddess she, and sprung from Gods ;—  
We, mortal as our fathers were.  
What matchless fame is thine ! to fall like those  
Of ancestry divine !

## STROPHE II.

*Ant.* Ah me ! I am derided. Why, oh why,  
By my ancestral Gods,  
Why do ye mock me, ere the tomb  
Hath veiled me from your sight ?  
O my loved Thebes ! and ye,  
Her lordly habitants !  
O ye Dircean streams !  
Thou sacred grove of car-compelling Thebes !  
I here invoke you to attest my wrongs,  
How, by my friends unwept, and by what laws,  
I sink into the caverned gloom  
Of this untimely sepulchre !  
Me miserable !  
Outcast from earth, and from the tomb,  
I am not of the living or the dead.

*Ch.* Hurried to daring's wild excess,  
Deeply, my daughter, hast thou sinned  
Against th' exalted Throne of Right.  
The woes that crushed thy father, fall on thee.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

*Ant.* Ah ! thou hast probed mine anguish to the  
quick,

The source of all my pangs,  
My father's widely-blazoned fate ;  
And the long train of ills,  
Which crushed, in one wide wreck,  
The famed Labdacidæ !  
Woe for the withering curse  
Of those maternal nuptials, which impelled  
My sire, unconscious, to a parent's couch !  
From whom I sprung, by birth a very wretch :  
To whom accursed, unwedded, now  
I sink to share their drear abode.

Alas, my brother !

Ill-omened were thy nuptials ! Thou,  
Though dead, dost hurl me, living, to the tomb.

*Ch.* Religion bids us grace the dead ;  
But might, when regal might bears sway,  
Must never, never, be contemned.  
Thine own unbending pride hath sealed thy doom.

*Ant.* Unmourned, unfriended, 'reft of bridal joys,  
Despairingly I tread  
The path too well prepared.

No more for ever must I hail thy beams,  
Thou glad and holy sun !  
Yet to my doom no sorrowing friend accords  
The tribute of a tear.

*Enter CREON.*

CREON, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

*Cr.* What, know ye not, that none, ere death  
arrive,  
Would ever cease their plaints, could words avail  
them ?

Instant conduct her hence ; and, as I bade,  
Immure her in the deep sepulchral cave ;  
There leave her lone and desolate, or to die  
Or live imprisoned in that drear abode.  
We from her death shall thus be pure ; and she  
Shall hold no more communion with the living.

*Ant.* O tomb ! O bridal bed ! O dark abode !  
My ever-during prison ! whither now  
I sink to join my kindred, a sad train,  
Whom Proserpine among the silent dead  
Hath long received ;—of whom the last in time,  
The first in sorrow, I to Death descend,

Ere mine allotted earthly term be past.  
Yet e'en in death I cherish one warm hope,  
That dear to my loved father I shall come,  
Dear to thee, mother ! and most dear to thee,  
My brother ! for in death my hand received you,  
Your relics laved, your lifeless limbs composed,  
And o'er your tomb libations poured. And now,  
Dear Polynices, I have honoured thee  
With funeral rites, and thus do they requite me.  
Yet will not justice blame my pious care ;  
Since, had I been a mother or a wife,  
And my loved child or wedded lord had lain  
Unsepulchred on earth, not e'en for them  
Would I have braved the state to do this deed.  
Ask ye what motive sways me thus to think ?  
Had but my husband or my child been slain,  
<sup>7</sup>Haply I might have wed another lord,

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<sup>7</sup> Our English ladies are entreated to make allowance for a mode of thinking and reasoning so opposite to their own. A similar principle, according to Herodotus, was acted upon by the wife of Intaphernes, a noble Persian, who, when allowed by Darius to save from death whichever of her kindred she preferred, selected her brother, for precisely the same reason as that assigned to Antigone.



Or joyed in other children ; but the tomb  
Hath closed above my parents, and from hence  
A brother could no more be born to me.  
Since, swayed by thoughts like these, I honoured  
                  thee

Beyond all other kindred, dearest brother,  
This Creon counts me guilty and perverse :  
And now he leads me with remorseless hand,  
Severed from nuptial joys, and bridal hymns,  
And wedlock's dearest bliss, a mother's pride,  
In the fond nurture of a smiling offspring ;  
But friendless now, deserted, desolate,  
I seek in life the dwellings of the dead.  
Which of your laws, ye Powers, have I transgressed ?—  
Yet wherefore do I turn me to the Gods ?—  
Whom shall I call to aid me, since I meet  
For pious deeds the vengeance of the guilty ?  
If acts like these are sanctioned by the Gods,  
I will address me to my doom in silence ;  
If not, and these offend, may Heaven requite  
On them such evils as they wreak on me.

*Ch.* The same wild storms of frenzied rage  
Distract th' unhappy maiden still.

*Cr.* For this the lingering slaves ere long  
Shall learn in tears to mourn their vain delay.

*Ant.* Alas ! death cannot be dissevered far  
From that appalling threat.

*Cr.* Aye, I would warn thee not to hope  
The doom, once sealed, may be reversed.

*Ant.* O Thebes, proud city of my sires !  
O tutelary Gods !  
They force me hence, and respite is denied.  
Behold, ye rulers of imperial Thebes,  
The last sad daughter of a royal line,  
What fearful wrongs I suffer, and from whom ;—  
My only crime a pious deed.

[*ANTIGONE is led off. Exit CREON.*]

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

Thus, long in brazen cell immured,  
To change day's genial light for cheerless gloom,  
To pine enshrouded in a living tomb,  
Fair Danae erst endured ;—  
Yet, O my child ! my child ! of lineage high  
She came, and to immortal Jove  
Cherished the golden pledge of love ;—  
But matchless is the might of destiny :

<sup>8</sup> Nor storm, nor martial might, nor stately tower,  
Nor wave-repelling fleets escape the tameless Power.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

So Dryas' haughty son was bound,  
Edonia's Lord, for words of wrathful pride,  
Chained by th'<sup>9</sup> Avenging Power his taunts defied  
In rocky cave profound ;—  
And thus the venom of his maddening breast  
Still flows afresh. Too late he knew  
How rage had fired him to pursue  
A God with keen reproach. His wrath repressed

---

<sup>8</sup> On this passage an ingenious conjectural emendation is proposed by Erfurdt, ὄλβος for ὄμβρος ;—a conjecture, as he justly remarks, not only recommended by its accordancy with the general sense of the sentence, but by a parallel passage, of exactly similar construction, in Bacchylides.

Θνατοῖς δ' οὐκ αὐθαίρετοι

Ἦντ' ὈΛΒΟΣ, ὅντ' ἄκαμπτος ἮΡΗΣ

Ἦντε πάμφθιρσις στάσις — ἄλλ' ἐπιχρίμπτι

Νίφος ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἄλλαν γᾶν

Ἦ πάνδωρος Αἴσα.

<sup>9</sup> Th' avenging Power. Ἦκ Διόνυσος, by Bacchus. The story of Lycurgus, who was punished by Bacchus for expelling the Bacchanalians from his territories, is differently related by various authors.

The raving Virgins ;—quenched the Evœan fire ;—  
And mocked with impious taunts the Sisters of the  
Lyre.

## STROPHE II.

Where the Cyanean rocks divide  
In double sea the rushing tide,  
And rise the high Bosphorean shores,  
And Thracian Salmydessus towers ;  
There Mars, the guardian of the realms around,  
Beheld a raging <sup>10</sup>step-dame's deadly deed.  
He saw your mangled eyeballs bleed,  
O sons of Phineus ! by that fatal wound  
Consigned to night profound !—  
That wound, alas ! no spear of warrior brave,  
But woman's blood-stained hand, and woman's  
weapon gave.

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<sup>10</sup> Phineus married Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas and Orithyia, by whom he had two sons, Crambis and Orythus. He afterwards repudiated her, and married Idaia, who put out the eyes of Crambis and Orythus. Cleopatra, to escape her cruelty, concealed herself among the rocks, where she died. To this circumstance the Chorus alludes.—Potter.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Pining in anguish and in gloom,  
They mourned their mother's hapless doom;  
Wedded with evil omens she  
To bear a wretched progeny!  
She sprung from high Erectheus' ancient seed,—  
Yet, ah! though nursed where wild in dreary cave,  
Storms of her father Boreas rave,  
Bounding o'er lofty hills, her winged speed  
Outstripped the fiery steed;—  
What recked her race of Gods? Their firm decree,  
On her the Fates fulfilled, my daughter! as on thee.

*Enter TIRESIAS, conducted by a Youth.*

TIRESIAS, CREON, CHORUS.

*Ti.* Princes of Thebes, we tread our wonted path,  
One sight directing both; this mode alone  
Remains to guide the wanderings of the blind.

*Cr.* Hath aught occurred of import new or strange,  
Aged Tiresias?

*Ti.* I will tell thee, King !

Do thou obey the Prophet.

*Cr.* Never yet

Thy warning did I slight.

*Ti.* Thence hast thou steered

Aright the helm of empire.

*Cr.* I confess

Thy counsels oft have led me to success.

*Ti.* Then heed them now. Thou art in desperate  
peril.

*Cr.* What mean'st thou?—how I tremble at thy  
words!

*Ti.* List, and the symbols of mine art shall tell  
thee.

When on mine ancient stool of augury,  
Where every bird flocks round me, I sat down,  
Burst on mine ear a strange unwonted sound  
Of birds, with shrill and dissonant screamings wild,  
While with ensanguined talons I perceived  
They tore each other ; this the flapping hoarse  
Of wings betokened plainly. Struck with awe,  
I next essayed the hallowed fires that burn  
On the high blazing altars ; but the flame  
Refused to shine upon the sacrifice ;  
And, oozing from the limbs, the vapour flowed

Mid the loose ashes, where it fumed and hissed ;  
The swollen entrails were dispersed ; the thighs,  
Stripped of th' involving caul, lay bare around.  
These fearful signs of import strange and dire  
I learned from mine attendant—he recounts  
To me the symbols I explain to others.  
'Tis thy relentless soul that plagues thy country.  
Our sacred altars and domestic hearths  
Are strewed by dogs and birds with their foul prey,  
The corpse of Œdipus' ill-fated son ;  
For this the Gods reject our hallowed rites,  
Our prayers, and votive victims,—while the birds,  
Sated with human flesh and human blood,  
Can only utter sounds of omen dire.  
Therefore, my son, consider ; since to err  
Is common to mankind ; nor is that man  
Unhappy or unwise, who, when betrayed  
To error, mourns his lapse, and doth not cleave  
Inflexible to ill. Know, stubbornness  
Doth ever argue folly. To the dead  
Give way, nor trample on a fallen foe—  
What courage needs it to insult the lifeless ?  
I speak with soul benevolent to thee ;  
'Tis sweet to learn from one who counsels well,  
If he regard our welfare.

*Cr.* Aye, old man,

I am your butt ; ye all, like archers, aim  
Your wily shafts at me. I know you well,  
The venal tribe of prophets, and by them  
Too oft have I been bartered and betrayed.  
Go on ; pursue your traffic, and acquire  
The Sardinian amber and the Indian gold,  
If so ye list ; but never shall ye shroud  
This wretch within the tomb, though Jove's swift  
bird

Should bear the mouldering relics as his prey,  
E'en to th' eternal throne. Yea, though I feared  
Pollution dire as this, I would not yield  
To honour him with sepulture ;—well I know  
That none of mortal birth can e'er pollute  
The holy Gods ! And mark me, old Tiresias !  
Oft do the sagest of our race incur  
The vilest shame, when, lured by sordid gain,  
They clothe base counsels in the garb of honour.

*Ti.* Ha ! is there one who knows—who thinks—

*Cr.* What wouldst thou ?

Are these thy words addressed alike to all ?

*Ti.* How much is wisdom man's most precious  
treasure ?

*Cr.* So much, as folly is his greatest bane !



*Ti.* It is, in truth, a malady which seems  
Conspicuous in *thy* conduct.

*Cr.* I forbear  
To shame the Prophet with a keen retort.

*Ti.* Yet this thou dost in charging me with  
falsehood.

*Cr.* Ah ! ye are fond of gold, ye tribe of prophets.

*Ti.* The tribe of tyrants seems indeed to love  
Dishonourable gains.

*Cr.* Know'st thou thy words  
Are spoken to thy Monarch ?

*Ti.* Aye, I know it ;  
'Twas by my counsels thou didst save thine empire.

*Cr.* Thou art a skilful prophet, but too prone  
To deeds of baseness.

*Ti.* Wilt thou then provoke me  
To speak the awful secrets of my soul ?

*Cr.* Well, speak them, so thou dost not ask  
reward.

*Ti.* And seem I, in thy judgement, to demand it ?

*Cr.* Know first, thou shalt not traffic in my  
purpose.

*Ti.* And know thou, too, proud Monarch, ere  
the car  
Of yon bright sun shall oft his course fulfil,

**Thou of thine own loved offspring shalt repay  
A just and equal ransom, dead for dead,  
For one whom thou hast plunged from upper air  
To dwell beneath, whom to the dark abodes,  
Yet living, thou hast doomed ; nor less for one,  
Whom of the honours due to Hell's dread Powers,  
Of funeral rites, of sacred obsequies,  
Thou hast bereft. Here no concern hast thou,  
None have the Heavenly Powers ; but thou hast  
wrought**

**These shameless deeds by lawless violence.  
Wherefore the sure Avengers, who pursue  
The track of Guilt, the Furies of the Shades,  
Are ambushed round thy path, and soon will plunge  
thee**

**In ruin hopeless as thy rage inflicted.  
Mark now, if gold hath bribed me thus to presage ;—  
Pass but a few short moments, and the shriek  
Of men, and wail of women, through thy halls  
Shall ring ; and all the hostile states, whose slain  
The dogs, and beasts, and ravening birds, have torn,  
Wafting their noisome odours o'er the plain,  
Shall rise against thee. Such, then, are the shafts,  
Which, archer-like, my hand hath now discharged,  
For thou hast roused my wrath ; and from the wound**

These shafts inflict, thou wilt not find relief.  
Boy, lead me to my home ; and leave yon Tyrant  
To vent his impotent rage on younger heads ;  
And let him learn to curb his tongue to silence,  
And hold a wiser mind than now he holds.

[*Exeunt* TIRESIAS and Youth.

CREON, CHORUS.

*Ch.* The prophet hath departed, O my Lord,  
Denouncing dread events ; and well I know,  
Since time's long round hath silvered my dark locks,  
The state hath never proved his presage faithless.

*Cr.* I know it too ; and therefore doubts distract me.  
To yield bespeaks a coward, yet I fear  
To rush upon destruction, if I cross him.

*Ch.* Son of Menceceus, thou hast need of  
prudence.

*Cr.* What wouldst thou have me do ? Give thine  
advice,  
And I will straight obey it.

*Ch.* Then away !—  
Release the virgin from her rock-hewn cave,  
And grace th' unburied corpse with sepulture.

*Cr.* Is this thy counsel? Dost thou bid me yield?

*Ch.* Without delay, my Lord! Th' avenging curse  
Of Heaven is swift to crush the disobedient.

*Cr.* O but 'tis hard ;—yet I must fain submit—  
To war with stern Necessity were madness.

*Ch.* Haste, then, perform thy purpose, nor entrust  
The task to others.

*Cr.* With all speed I fly—  
Haste—haste—attendants ! ye who here await,  
And ye too at a distance ;—haste—and bring  
Keen axes in your hands—fly to the cave—  
I too, since my first sentence is repealed,  
Who bound, will now release her ; for I fear  
That, while we live, 'twill prove our truest wisdom  
To venerate th' eternal laws of Justice.

*[Exit CREON with Attendants.]*

*Chorus.*

#### STROPHE I.

<sup>1</sup> O Thou, by countless names renowned,

---

<sup>1</sup> The names of Bacchus, which were numerous, were derived chiefly from his attributes. Thus, he was called Lyæus,

Pride of the Theban nymph, and progeny  
 Of Jove, whose thunders rend the sky!  
 Who with thy favouring presence dost surround  
 'Italia's far-famed clime, and reign  
 O'er Ceres' general bosom, the rich plain  
 Of fair Eleusis—Bacchus, King divine!  
 Who dwell'st in Thebes, thy fair and favoured shrine;  
 Thebes, mother-town of Bacchanals, where flows  
 Ismenus, and from earth the dragon-seed arose;—

## ANTISTROPHE I.

'Thee saw the heaven-ascending fire,  
 Which fierce and far from forked Parnassus glowed;  
 Where to their tutelary God  
 Roam in wild orgies the Corycian choir,  
 And springs the pure Castalian fount;—  
 Thee saw the vine-clad slopes of Nysa's mount  
 Crowned with enwreathing ivy, where to Thee  
 Breathe strains of more than mortal melody;

from *λίω*, because wine opens the heart (*aperit præcordia Liber*); *Lenæus*, from *ληνῆς*, a wine-press, &c.

<sup>2</sup> The Tuscans were great observers of the worship of Bacchus.

<sup>3</sup> Euripides also mentions this fire, which was supposed to announce the presence of the God on Mount Parnassus.

Echoing through groves of rich-empurpled vine,  
To hail the Lord of Thebes, her honoured King  
divine ;—

## STROPHE II.

Thebes, whose illustrious name  
By Thee with noblest honours is approved,  
Nor by thy beauteous Mother less beloved,  
The lightning-stricken dame.—  
Yet now, alas ! a dire disease pervades  
The drooping city. Come, O come,  
With life-imparting step, o'er sylvan shades  
Clothing Parnassus' sloping sides in gloom,  
Or o'er the sounding gulf where echoing billows  
foam !

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Prince of each silver star,  
That breathes through darkness its celestial light ;—  
Lord of the train, who on the ear of night  
Swell their wild hymns afar ;—  
Blest youth ! high offspring of Eternal Jove !  
Haste, and thy fair attendants bring,  
Those Naxian nymphs the livelong night who  
rove,

Dancing around thy throne in festive ring,  
 And shout Iacchus' name, their leader and their  
       King.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Mess.* Inhabitants of Thebes, where Cadmus erst  
 And old Amphion reigned, I know not how,  
 Whate'er it be, to censure or to praise  
 The varying life of man;—since Fortune still  
 Lifts, at her will, th' unhappy from the dust,  
 Or dooms again the prosperous to despair,  
 Nor can prophetic skill divine the future.  
 I deemed the royal Creon greatly blessed,  
 Who from her foes the Theban state preserved;  
 Assumed the sole dominion of her realms;  
 Bore sway, and flourished in a generous race.  
 And now all—all is lost. For when the joys,  
 The sweet delights of life are reft for ever,  
 I scarce can say man lives;—though still he breathe,  
<sup>4</sup>The soul of life is fled. Heap, if thou wilt,

---

<sup>4</sup> Literally, ἔμψυχον ἡγοῦμαι νεκρόν, I account him a breathing corpse.

Vast treasures in thy house, and live enthroned  
In regal splendour ; yet to this thy pomp,  
If the heart's joy be wanting, all beside  
I would not purchase with th' illusive cloud  
Of unsubstantial smoke.

*Ch.* Of what new ills  
Com'st thou a herald to the royal house ?

*Mess.* They are no more—those live who caused  
their ruin.

*Ch.* Say, who hath wrought the deed, and who  
hath perished ?

*Mess.* Bathed in his blood, the lifeless Hæmon  
lies.

*Ch.* Slain by his own rash hand, or by his father's ?

*Mess.* Incensed against his father, for the death  
Of his loved bride, by his own hand he fell.

*Ch.* How true, O prophet, was thy fearful  
presage !

*Mess.* Since it is thus, the rest demands our  
thought.

*Ch.* But lo ! I see the King's unhappy wife,  
Eurydice, approach us ; in the palace  
She heard us name her son, or comes by chance.

*Enter EURYDICE.*



EURYDICE, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Eu.* Your conference we have heard, O citizens,  
As we came forth, departing to prefer  
Our suppliant prayers in chaste Athena's shrine.  
While yet my hand was loosening the firm bars  
Which close our palace-gates, the whispered voice  
Of some domestic evil met mine ear ;—  
Trembling I sunk amidst my maids supine,  
With sudden terror lifeless. Yet again  
I bid thee tell thy tale—for I shall hear it,  
Not unexperienced in severest woes.

*Mess.* As present there, dear Lady, all the tale  
Will I disclose, nor aught of truth disguise.  
Why should I soothe thee with evasive words,  
When time must prove their falsehood and mine own ?  
The truth is ever best. Thy royal Lord  
I, as his guide, attended to the verge  
Of that far plain, where torn by ravening dogs  
The corpse of Polynices lay defiled.  
Here, first invoking Hecate, and the King  
Of Hades, that by prayers propitiate now  
They would avert their wrath, in the pure stream

We laved the relics,—on a recent pyre  
Of boughs consumed them, and upreared a mound  
Of his loved natal earth. We next repaired  
To the sepulchral cave, the bridal couch  
Of her espoused to Death. But of our train  
A murmur of deep wailing from afar  
Round that unhonoured tomb one haply heard,  
And hastening told our Monarch. He approached,  
And still the muttered moanings on his ear  
Smote louder and less doubtful, till he groaned  
In bitter agony, and thus sighed forth—  
“ Unhappy me ! And is my presage true,  
“ And do I tread the most ill-omened path  
“ Of all my pilgrimage ? It is the voice  
“ Of mine own son that meets me ! Haste, oh haste,  
“ Attendants, to the sepulchre, and remove  
“ The rock’s obstructing barrier ; look within ;—  
“ I hear the voice of Hæmon, of my son,  
“ Or am by Heaven deluded.” We obeyed  
The bidding of our half distracted Lord,  
And looked. Soon in the cavern’s dim recess  
We see the virgin—lifeless—hanging there  
In noose enwoven of her linen robe.  
There too lay Hæmon, clasping his pale bride,  
Mourning his plighted consort, to the Powers

Of Hell espoused—his father's act severe—  
And his most joyless nuptials. When the King  
Beheld him, deeply sighing—to the tomb  
Entering, with loud lament he thus exclaimed :  
“ O my unhappy child, what hast thou done ?  
“ What fearful purpose sways thee ? By what woes  
“ Art thou thus plunged in anguish ? O my son  
“ Come forth, a suppliant father here conjures thee.”  
But on his sire he turned his glaring eyes  
With the stern air of mingled hate and scorn,  
Nor answer deigned, but bared his two-edged brand ;  
The King by flight evaded, and the blow  
Fell impotent. Then the distracted youth,  
Indignant with himself, stretched out the sword,  
And sheathed it in his bosom. Conscious still  
Around the lifeless maid his arms he threw  
With fond embrace, and, breathing his last sigh,

---

<sup>5</sup> This act of Hæmon is censured by Aristotle as causeless and unnatural. May it not, however, be urged in defence of the Poet, that a sudden impulse, on the first and unexpected sight of the author of his woes, might urge the unhappy youth to a deed of desperation ; particularly since he does not persevere in the attempt, but, as though in ungovernable distraction and remorse, immediately turns his fury upon himself ?

Tinged her pale cheek with crimson, for the blood  
Came gushing with the fluttering sob of death ;  
And lifeless now he sleeps beside the dead,  
In Hell's dark gloom his nuptial rites completing,  
A solemn, sad example to mankind,  
How great an evil is unbridled rashness.

[*Exit* EURYDICE.]

CHORUS, MESSENGER.

*Ch.* What dost thou judge from this? The Queen  
is gone

Without one word of patience, or despair.

*Mess.* I too am lost in wonder—but I still  
Indulge a hope ; that, learning thus the doom  
Of her lost son, she will not deign to wail  
Throughout the city, but retired within,  
Will vent her grief in secret with her maidens.  
She is more prudent than to err in this.

*Ch.* I know not—yet I like not this deep silence,  
It bodes some dark resolve—more clamorous grief  
Vents all its force in words.

*Mess.* Soon shall we learn  
If aught so desperate lurks within her breast,

By hastening to the palace ; well thou say'st  
Deep silence is the herald of destruction.

*Ch.* And lo ! the King himself appears,  
Bearing the sad memorials of his woe  
° Within his arms ; if we may justly speak,  
He is the author of his own despair !

*Enter CREON, bearing his Son's body.*

CREON, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

*Cr.* Woe for the errors of a frenzied mind,  
Ruthless and fraught with death !  
O mark, in kindred ties allied,  
The slayers and the slain !  
Such of my counsels is the bitter fruit !  
Alas ! for thee, my son, my son,  
Who, in youth's vernal prime  
Art perished, and hast fled,  
Through mine insensate rashness, not thine own.

---

° The entrance of Creon, bearing his son's corpse, will doubtless remind the reader of that scene in Shakspeare, where Lear comes in, carrying in his arms the lifeless body of Cordelia.

*Ch.* Alas! how late dost thou acknowledge, King,  
The justice of the Gods.

## STROPHE II.

*Cr.* Ah me! I learn it in mine own despair.  
Then, then upon my head the wrath divine  
Smote heaviest—to perdition urged me on,  
And trod my joys in dust. Alas! the toils!  
The hapless toils of man!

*Enter SECOND MESSENGER.*

*2d Mess.* Sorrows are deepening round thee, O  
my Lord ;—

One source of bitterest grief thy hands sustain,  
One waits within which thou must soon behold.

*Cr.* What yet remains to dreg the cup of sor-  
row?

*2d Mess.* Thy Queen, the mother of this lifeless  
youth,  
Hath died, unhappy, by a recent wound.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Cr.* Oh! thou inexpiable home of death,  
Why dost thou crush me thus?—  
O herald of o'erwhelming woes  
What horrors dost thou bring?—

Why, why press down a wretch already lost ?

What hast thou said ? what new despair,

Redoubling woes on woes ?—

And to a murdered son

Dost thou then add my wife's destruction too?—

*2d Mess.* <sup>7</sup> Thou mayst behold her, now no  
more, within.

#### ANTISTROPHE II.

*Cr.* Alas ! I gaze upon a second woe.

What doom, ah ! what awaits the victim still ?

In these sad hands a lifeless son I bear,

There mark another recent corpse—Woe ! woe !

Sad mother ! wretched son !

*2d. Mess.* Before the hallowed altars, in wild wrath  
She fell—and closed her eyes in Death's dull  
night,

Deploring first indeed th' illustrious bed

Of <sup>8</sup> Megareus—long since to death consigned ;

<sup>7</sup> The scene here opens, and discloses to view the remains of the Queen.

<sup>8</sup> Commentators do not agree respecting this Megareus. Some make him a former husband of Eurydice ; others suppose him to have been the same with Menœceus, son of Creon and Eurydice, whose patriotism and death are related in the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides.

Then this her hapless son,—last on thy head  
 She imprecated curses, and proclaimed thee  
 The murderer of thy child !

STROPHE III.

*Cr.* Woe ! woe is me !

I quake with horror. Will no friendly hand  
 In mercy plunge deep, deep the two-edged sword ?  
 I am a very wretch,  
 Condemned to struggle with o'er-mastering woes !

*2d Mess.* Ere yet she perished, with her parting  
 breath,

She charged on thee the fatal doom of both.

*Cr.* And by what means did death relieve her  
 sorrows ?

*2d Mess.* Deep in her side she buried the keen  
 sword,

Soon as her son's lamented doom she heard.

STROPHE IV.

*Cr.* Wretch that I am ! the guilt is all mine own,  
 None shared the deadly deed !  
 I am alone the blood-stained homicide ;  
 'Tis all too clear O ! lead me hence,



Attendants, bear me hence ! away—away—  
For I am nothing now !

*Ch.* Well dost thou judge, if in despair like thine  
Aught can be well, for heaviest evils press  
With lighter burden, when from sight removed.

## ANTISTROPHE III.

*Cr.* Come, then, O come,  
Shine forth, thou last and lightest of my woes,  
Bringing the final and most welcome hour  
Of suffering ! Come, O come,  
That I may view the light of Heaven no more.

*Ch.* These cares respect the future—first befits  
To weigh with prudent thought the present crisis.  
Let those direct on whom such charge devolves.

*Cr.* What most my soul desires, I did but make  
My first and warmest prayer.

*Ch.* Pray now for nothing—  
There is no refuge for devoted man,  
When fate consigns him to a doom of woe.

## ANTISTROPHE IV.

*Cr.* Lead hence this lifeless shade, far, far away.  
Who, though unwilling all,  
Slew thee, my son ! thee, too, O wife beloved !

Ah ! wretch ! I know not where to look,  
Or whither fly. All are against me now—  
Fate is itself my foe.

*Ch.* There is no guide to happiness on earth,  
Save wisdom ; nor behoves it us to fail  
In reverence to the Gods ! High-sounding vaunts  
Inflict due vengeance on the haughty head,  
And teach late wisdom to its dark old age.

END OF VOL. I.



**THE**  
**TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES.**

**MARCHANT, PRINTER, INGRAM-COURT, FENCHURCH-STREET.**

THE  
**TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES,**

**TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE.**

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**BY THE REV. THOMAS DALE, B.A.**  
**OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.**

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JAN



# TRACHINIÆ.





## TRACHINIÆ.

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It has been remarked by Aristotle, that Æschylus painted men greater than they can be, Sophocles such as they ought to be, and Euripides such as they are. This encomium, though most applicable and appropriate in reference to those characters of the dramas of Sophocles which are strictly *human* personages, cannot in justice be extended either to his Heroes or his Deities. Hercules, in the following tragedy, constitutes as indifferent a specimen of the heroic character as Minerva, in the Ajax, presents of the divine. The son of Jove, notwithstanding his celestial extraction and destined exal-

tation, is represented to us as enslaved by the most abject and degrading of all human weaknesses. He is indeed a practical exemplification of the Anacreontic sentiment,

..... κάλλος

'Αντ' ἀσπίδων ἀπασῶν,

'Αντ' ἰγχείων ἀπάντων.

and unites to the most abandoned licentiousness the qualities of gross intemperance and unrelenting cruelty; for no greater provocation than because a father had refused to deliver up his daughter to the secret embraces of a brutal violator, this favourite of Heaven, this scourge of tyrants and oppressors, invades an unoffending state, levels its capital with the dust, slays its monarch, and consigns its inhabitants to a miserable captivity. Reserving for the most infamous purposes the daughter of the King whom he has murdered, he insults his father Jove by offering at his shrine the trophies of successful villany. Such is a true portrait of the most celebrated hero of ancient mythology; and such a delineation may well convince us, that the bard, who could duly appreciate the excellen-

cies of the human character, was utterly unable to estimate the perfections of the divine.

Yet it is not intended, by these observations, to impeach either the judgement or the discretion of the poet. The gross and glaring defects of this drama are attributable, not to the writer, but to the age. Whatever abstract opinion the genius of Sophocles might have formed respecting the character of a hero, he would be compelled, in the delineation of an individual personage, to consider the prejudices and prepossessions of his audience. The Athenians, who knew what was right, would gladly plead the example of their heroes and divinities, to excuse them from practising it. And, whatever may be asserted to the contrary by the admirers of antiquity, it is an irrefutable fact, that with all the refinement and elegance of Athens was mingled, even at the most flourishing period of its existence, a degree of barbarism almost inconceivable.

Leaving these remarks, which are perhaps somewhat irrelevant, let us descend from the hero to the woman, from the licentious and implacable Her-

cules to the chaste and affectionate Deianira, and we shall again recognise, in all its vigour and beauty, the transcendant genius of Sophocles. Here, at least, all is natural, becoming, and consistent. The lively exultation of the unhappy Queen at the intelligence of her Lord's triumph, and the promise of his return ;—that mournful presage of the instability of all human transport, which is so exquisitely represented as stealing over her at the sight of the unhappy captives ;—her generous compassion for Iole's sorrows, so well preparing us to sympathise with her own ;—the hurried agony in which she resolves on sending the fatal robe ;—her swift repentance and anxious alarm ;—the utter anguish in which she listens to the reproaches of her son, describing his father's sufferings ;—the silent desperation with which she rushes to the bridal couch, there to expiate her unconscious crime by a violent death ;—in all these we discern the hand of a master, and forget the deficiencies of other characters in contemplating the excellence of this. On the whole, this drama, if it does not exalt the reputation of Sophocles, would have crowned a meaner poet with immortality.

**The chorus is composed of Trachinian virgins. The scene is at Trachis, in Thessaly, whither Hercules had retired after the unintentional murder of his relative, the grandson of Æneus.**

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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DEIANIRA.

ATTENDANT.

HYLLUS.

CHORUS OF TRACHINIAN VIRGINS.

TRACHINIAN, OR MESSENGER.

LICHAS.

MATRON, OR NURSE.

OLD MAN, ATTENDANT ON HERCULES.

HERCULES.

## TRACHINIÆ.

---

DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

*Dei.* 'Tis an old adage, and of all approved,  
That never canst thou learn, if man's brief date  
Be blest or wretched, till by death fulfilled ;  
Yet, ere the grave enshroud me, well I know  
How dreary and unblest hath been mine own.  
When in the palace of my sire I dwelt  
At Pleuron, if of all th' Ætolian maids  
One feared detested nuptials, 'twas myself.  
My suitor was the River-God—I speak  
Of Achelöus—who, in triple form,



Required me of my father ; first he came  
A manifest bull ;—next rolled in volumed folds  
A spotted serpent ;—then gigantic stalked  
In form a mortal, and in head a bull,  
While from his bearded chin irriguous flowed  
Streams of the fountain flood. To such a lord  
Was I, unhappy ! destined ; and for death  
Arose my ceaseless prayer, or ere I came  
To his loathed bridal couch. At length, though late,  
Yet oh ! to me how welcome, the famed son  
Of lofty Jove and fair Alcmena came,  
Who, with the monster matched in mortal strife,  
My freedom won. The horrors of the fray  
I cannot tell—I know them not—such scene  
He, who unmoved beheld it, best can paint.  
Appalled I sate in mute and breathless fear,  
Lest that my fatal beauty should but work  
My lasting woe. The Arbiter of strife,  
Eternal Jove, th' event awarded well,  
If it indeed were well. I, to the couch  
Of Hercules advanced, his well-won prize,  
Still in my bosom feed corroding care,  
Distracted for my lord. Nights come and wane,  
But only lend variety to woe.  
And I have borne him children, whom, like one

That tills a field far distant, he hath seen  
But twice—in seed-time and in harvest once.  
A life like this restores the chief to home,  
And drives him thence, in ceaseless bondage held.  
Now, his allotted labours all achieved,  
Redoubled terrors haunt me. From what time  
He slew the valiant Iphitus, we dwell  
Exiles in Trachis with our generous host.  
But where my lord is gone, this none can tell.  
Hence, his strange absence wakes my restless dread ;  
I more than fear some dire reverse hath chanced.  
'Tis no brief space ;—ten lingering months have fled,  
And five ; yet through this long, long interval  
He sends no herald ; there is some dread cause.  
Parting, such tablet to my hand he gave ;—  
The Gods in mercy grant I have received it,  
Not to our mutual misery !

*Att.* Honoured lady !

Long have I witnessed thine incessant tears,  
Poured for the absent Hercules ; and now,  
If it be lawful for a slave to breathe  
Her counsel to the freeborn, would I speak:  
Lady, thou dost abound in manly sons ;  
Why send not one to seek thine absent lord ?  
And first, if I may name him, the brave Hyllus,

Whom, if his sire he reverence, such bold deed  
Would best beseem. Lo! to the palace now  
He hastens opportune, and if thou deem  
My counsel worthy, of thy son's approach,  
And of my words, thou mayst avail thee now.

*Enter* HYLLUS.

HYLLUS, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

*Dei.* My son, my much-loved offspring, from  
the lips  
Ev'n of th' ignobly born high speech proceeds.  
This woman is a slave, and yet her words  
Might well become the free.

*Hyll.* What hath she spoken?  
Inform me, mother! if thou mayst inform me.

*Dei.* She deems it foul reproach, that when so  
long  
Thy sire delays, thou shouldst not search what land  
Hath thus detained him.

*Hyll.* This I know already,  
If we may credit rumour.

*Dei.* Where on earth,  
My son, abides thy father?

*Hyll.* The past year,  
'Tis said, in bondage to a Lydian dame,  
He bore th' ignoble labours of a slave.

*Dei.* If shame like this he brooked, what added  
baseness

May we not dread to hear?

*Hyll.* But, as I learn,  
He is once more in freedom.

*Dei.* Where doth fame  
Report him tarrying now, alive or dead?

*Hyll.* Against Eubœa and King Eurytus,  
He led, or now prepares to lead, his band.

*Dei.* Knowst thou, my son, the certain oracles  
He left with me, relating to that land?

*Hyll.* What oracles? Thy words are new and  
strange.

*Dei.* That there his earthly pilgrimage shall  
close,

Or, in this strife triumphant, he should pass  
His yet remaining days in peace serene.

And, in such crisis, wilt not thou, my son,  
Speed to the succour of thy noble father?

If he survive, his fortunes shall we share,  
And if he perish, we must perish too.

*Hyll.* I go, my mother! had I earlier known  
 The prescient word, I had not paused till now.  
 ' My father's wonted victories will not leave  
 Our minds to sink in terror. Yet, since now  
 Informed, I will not cease till I explore  
 The certain truth of all.

*Dei.* Go then, my son!  
 He who, though late, aspires to noble deeds,  
 When wisdom warns him, wins the meed of fame.

*Enter* CHORUS.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE.

O thou! whom star-gemmed night declining  
 Wakes into birth, or soothes to bland repose;  
 Thou Sun! in matchless splendour shining,  
 Thee, thee I ask—do thou, bright Power! disclose  
 Where doth Alcmena's offspring dwell?  
 O thou, who beam'st with ever-lucid ray,  
 Doth the bold chief in sea-girt isle delay?

---

' In this passage the translator has followed the arrangement of Erfurdt in preference to that of Brunck.

<sup>2</sup> In east or western climes? O tell,  
 Thou, whose pervading eye doth Heaven and Earth  
 survey.

## ANTISTROPHE.

I hear the plaintive wild lamenting,  
 Which, like some hapless bird, for her loved lord  
 Sad Deianira still is venting,—  
 And slumber's lenient balm is never poured  
 O'er her dull eye-lids!—In her breast  
 The hero lives, well, well remembered there;  
 While on her widowed couch in chill despair,  
 Unsolaced still by genial rest,  
 She thinks on heavier ills her absent lord may bear.

## STROPHE II.

As o'er the broad blue ocean,  
 From north or south when whirlwinds rise,  
 Unnumbered billows to the skies  
 Are hurled in wild commotion,

---

<sup>2</sup> In order to avoid the incongruity of placing Hercules in two continents at once, it has been proposed to read *λίσσασιν*, for *δισσασιν*. Without, however, investing the hero with the attribute of ubiquity, we may suppose the passage merely to imply an inquiry whether he were in Europe or in Asia.

And waves on waves successive roll ;—  
So must the Theban Hero bear  
The ruder shock of ceaseless care ;  
So ever-changing toils control,  
Rough as the Cretan waves ; yet some kind God  
Preserves him, ever safe, from Pluto's drear abode.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

And hence would I reprove thee,  
Consoling while I seem to chide ;—  
Why should fair hope be cast aside,  
And chill despondence move thee ?  
The Sire, who sways this earthly sphere,  
Wills not unclouded bliss to send  
On man—but grief with joy to blend,  
And temper hope by fear :—  
Both, like the starry group that gems the pole,  
With ever-varying course, in just succession roll.

## EPODE.

Spangled night, with sable sway,  
Frowns not on the world for aye ;  
Sorrow wounds not—golden store  
Doth not bless to change no more ;

Joy and woe in turn succeed ;  
Hearts in turn must bound and bleed.  
Lady, on my counsels dwell,  
Trust that all may yet be well ;—  
When, oh when ! did lofty Jove  
Reckless of his children prove ?

## DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

*Dei.* Aware, it seems, of mine o'erwhelming woes  
Thou com'st—but, oh ! what pangs distract my soul,  
From sad experience mayst thou never know !  
As yet thou know'st not. Ever fresh and fair  
Smile the gay meads where youth exults to rove ;  
Unharm'd by sultry suns, or stormy showers,  
By wintry winds unruffled—while the tide  
Of life flows on in glad unvarying course ;  
But when the name of virgin is exchanged  
For that of wife, through the lone hours of night  
What sleepless care she feels—now for her lord,  
Now for her children fearing. Then alone  
From her own sufferings will she learn the weight  
That presses on my heart. In days long past  
Many and various evils have I mourned,



But never felt the pangs that now I feel.  
 What time the royal Hercules went forth  
 Upon his last emprise, within his halls  
 He left a<sup>3</sup> tablet, graven long since with words  
 Of highest import ; such on perilous deeds  
 Embarking, never to my hand he gave ;  
 But as to conquest parted—not to death.  
 Yet now, as if no more, he hath assigned  
 My nuptial dowry—to his children now  
 Divided their paternal heritage ;  
 Prescribing first the time ;—if thrice five months  
 Revolving found him absent,—then his doom  
 Was fixed for death ; if he survived the close,  
 Calm and unruffled were his future days.  
 Thus had the Gods, he said, assigned the term  
 Of his allotted labours ; thus the beech  
 Oracular, at old Dodona, spake  
 By the prophetic doves. The hour is come  
 When some event must prove the presage true ;

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<sup>3</sup> Παλαιὰν δῆλον ἐγγεγραμμένην.—This notable record proves, undeniably, that Sophocles believed alphabetic writing to have been in common use in Greece in the age of Hercules, and can admit of no other interpretation than a *written document* analogous to our notion of a *will*.—Penn's Primary Argument of the Iliad, ch. xi.

Therefore, dear virgins, when in pleasing sleep  
Entranced I lie, I start in frequent dread,  
Lest he, the noblest of mankind, should fall,  
And I remain to wail him !

*Ch.* Augur now  
Omens of happier import, for I see  
A crowned messenger approach from far.

*Enter* TRACHINIAN.

TRACHINIAN, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

*Tra.* Most honoured Deianira, I am here  
The first to free thee from thy load of terror—  
Know, thy Alcides lives, with conquest crowned,  
And offers to his tutelary Gods  
A sacrifice of triumph.

*Dei.* What, old man,  
What tidings dost thou bear me ?

*Tra.* Soon, oh soon,  
Thy long-sought lord shall in his home appear,  
Graced with triumphant fame.

*Dei.* And didst thou learn  
From citizens or strangers these glad tidings ?

*Tra.* The herald Lichas, in the verdant mead,  
 Recounted all. I heard the joyous tale,  
 And foremost rushed to bear the welcome news,  
 That I might win thy favour for my meed.

*Dei.* And how doth Lichas linger, when he bears  
 Tidings of triumph?

*Tra.* Lady, much withstands  
 His onward progress. Melia's thronging crowds  
 Press round, and check his passage. Ardent all  
 To catch the welcome tidings, none will brook  
 The herald's absence, till his wish be won.  
 Thus, though himself reluctant, he delays  
 With those who seek his presence. Thou, ere long,  
 Wilt greet his glad arrival.

*Dei.* Mighty Jove!  
 Who dwell'st mid Æta's sacred <sup>4</sup> unshorn meads,  
 On me, though late, thou hast bestowed deep joy.  
 Break forth, ye virgins, into songs of gladness;  
 Without, within the palace, let the hymns  
 Of joy resound; beyond my fondest hope  
 A ray of rapture brightens through despair.

<sup>4</sup> "Ατομον λειμῶνα.—So Euripides.

Σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στίφανον ἱξ ἀκηράτῃ

Λειμῶνος.—κ. τ. λ.—Hippol. 72.

*Chorus.*

Ye, who crowd yon palace, raise  
 Round your altars hymns of praise ;  
 Let the virgin-choir on high  
 Swell the bridal harmony ;  
 While the youth's responsive train  
 Echoes the exultant strain.  
 Sing the guardian Lord of Light,  
 Armed with golden quiver bright,  
 Blending still, with glad acclaim,  
 Pæan, Pæan, honoured name.  
 Virgins, pour th' enraptured lay  
 To the Sister of the Day ;  
 ' Dian sing, whose fatal bow  
 Lays the stately quarry low ;

<sup>s</sup> Ἐλαφηβόλον.—So Homer, Hymn. in Dian.

Ἄρτεμιν αἰίδω, χρυσηλάκατον, κελαδεινήν,

Παρθένον αἰδοιήν, ἱλαφηβόλον, ἰοχέαιραν.

Ἄμφιπυρον.—Hecate, or Diana, was represented in the mysteries as holding a torch in each hand. The epithet, however, may be taken as expressive merely of the splendour of the Goddess, “ de Diana in plenilunio : ἀμφιπύρον, undique fulgidum.”—Hippol. 559.

Vested in encircling fire—  
And th' attendant virgin <sup>6</sup> choir!

I soar extatic.—Monarch of my soul,  
Ne'er will I spurn, sweet pipe, thy bland control.  
The ivy-twined Thyrsus wakes a thrill  
Through all my breast, inflaming wild desire  
To join the sportive Bacchic choir.  
Iö, Iö Pæan still  
I sing!—Look, look, beloved Queen,  
Full in thy presence now the pledge of joy is seen.

*Dei.* I see, dear virgins; to its office still  
Mine eye is true, and marks this joyful train.

*Enter LICHAS with Captives.*

DEIANIRA, LICHAS, CHORUS, CAPTIVES.

Herald, I bid thee welcome, though thy coming  
Was long delayed, if thou bringst aught of glad-  
ness.

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<sup>6</sup> Γίτονάς τε νέμφας,—the adjacent shore of Trachis was sacred to Diana, who was usually accompanied with a train of attendant nymphs.

*Li.* We come with happiest omens, and our  
deeds,

Lady, this joyful greeting well may claim—  
Such words befit the messenger of good.

*Dei.* Thou of mankind most welcome—tell me  
first

What most I burn to hear ;—shall I once more  
Greet Hercules alive?—

*Li.* I left the King  
Strong in his wonted might, from ills secure,  
Vigorous in health, not pining with disease.

*Dei.* Where? in his own, or some barbaric clime?

*Li.* On the Eubœan shore ; an altar there  
He rears, and offers to Cenæan <sup>7</sup> Jove.

*Dei.* Some vow discharging, or by Heaven en-  
joined?

*Li.* Bound by a vow, when his good spear sub-  
dued

The city of these women, whom thou seest.

*Dei.* Who, by the Gods, are these, and whence  
their race?

They claim my pity, or their woes deceive me !

---

<sup>7</sup> So called, from Cenæum, a promontory of Eubœa, sacred to Jupiter.

*Li.* These, when the towers of Eurytus he razed,  
The victor for himself and Heaven reserved.

*Dei.* And in this siege were the long dreary  
                  months,  
Since last he left his palace, all consumed?

*Li.* No; through the greater part was he detained  
In Lydia, as he tells; not free, indeed,  
But bartered as a slave—nor thou arraign  
My tale, O Lady; 'twas the act of Jove.  
Sold to barbaric Omphale, he pined  
A year in bondage, as himself relates.  
Stung by disgrace so shameful, with an oath  
He charged his soul, to lead the guilty cause  
Of this keen outrage, with his wife and children,  
In bondage not less bitter. Nor in vain  
Was pledged his faith. He, from the guilt absolved,  
Raised his confederate band, and sought the towers  
Of Eurytus; for him of all mankind  
He deemed sole author of such deadly wrong;  
Who, when thy Lord his sheltering palace sought,  
A guest of ancient days, reviled him much  
In words of insult, much with rancorous soul;—  
And said—though he th' inevitable darts  
Bore in his hand, his sons were better skilled  
To draw the bow; and added—that a slave

Deserved but blows and insult from the free.

<sup>8</sup> And at the banquet, when with wine opprest,  
Expelled him from the palace. By such wrong  
Incensed, when <sup>9</sup> Iphitus essayed to track  
O'er the Tirynthian hills his vagrant steeds,  
And mind and eye on other cares were bent,  
From towering rock he dashed the wretch to earth.  
Indignant at the deed, Olympian Jove,  
The King and general Father, drove him forth  
To pine a purchased captive, nor endured  
That he should slay this only of mankind  
With treacherous fraud, though if in open war  
He had avenged the outrage, Jove had stamped  
His seal and sanction on the righteous deed ;  
But the great Gods abhor injurious wrong.  
They who with insolent taunts reviled the chief,

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<sup>8</sup> Hercules, though the son of Jupiter, and himself a probationary God, appears to have been addicted to drunkenness—one of the most disgusting of human propensities—in no common degree. Even the beautiful drama of *Alcestis* is deformed by the introduction of the inebriated Hercules, exclaiming to the astonished and indignant attendant—

Οὗτος, τί σιμὸν καὶ πεφροντικὸς βλέπεις ;

<sup>9</sup> One of the sons of Eurytus.



Are now the tenants of the silent tomb ;  
Their city is enslaved—these, whom thou seest,  
From loftiest splendour plunged to deepest woe,  
Await thy pleasure ; so thy Lord hath willed,  
And I, his faithful slave, fulfil his bidding.  
Know, too, that he, the votive rites performed  
For this glad conquest to his Father Jove,  
Himself will come. Of all my lengthened tale,  
This word, I deem, awakes thy liveliest joy.

*Ch.* Now, Queen, true joys are thine, from what  
thou seest,

And the glad tidings in his words conveyed.

*Dei.* How can I but exult, and that most justly,  
Hearing the prosperous fortunes of my Lord?  
There is, at least, high cause of transport here ;  
Yet those, who scan the dubious future well,  
Must fear, lest rapture change ere long to woe.  
Strange doubts, dear virgins, through my bosom  
thrill,

When these ill-fated captives I behold,  
Without or sheltering home, or parents' love,  
Unhappy wanderers in a foreign land,  
Who, sprung perchance from free-born sires, are  
doomed

Henceforth to pine in servitude unblest.  
 Eternal Jove,<sup>10</sup> averter of my woes !  
 O may I never be condemned to see  
 Thy hand thus heavy on my fated race ;  
 Or if thou will'st their woe, first let me perish :  
 Such dread the sight of this sad train awakes.  
 But who art thou? so young, and yet so wretched ;  
 A virgin or a mother? If thy mien  
 May wake conjecture, still unwedded thou ;  
 Whate'er thou art, most noble. Tell me, Lichas,  
 Who is this stranger-maid? What mother bare her?  
 What father boasts her lineage? Herald! speak,—  
 Far o'er the rest our sympathy she claims ;  
 For she alone endures her grief with patience.

*Li.* How should I know? Why ask of me such  
 question?

She springs, perchance, from no ignoble race.

*Dei.* Is she a daughter of King Eurytus?

*Li.* I cannot tell; I made no long demands.

*Dei.* From her companions heardst thou not her  
 name?

*Li.* No; I performed th' allotted task in silence.

<sup>10</sup> Ζῆν Τροπᾶσι—Jove, averter of ills, or subverter of empires.

*Dei.* Speak thou, unhappy ; tell thy tale of woe,  
For not to know thee seems itself misfortune.

*Li.* In sooth the virgin now no more replies  
Than heretofore ; nor hath she uttered aught  
Of lofty taunt, or plaint of hopeless woe ;  
But ever, crushed by grief's overwhelming load,  
Weeps on in restless anguish, since she left  
Her native land of storms. Sad is her doom ;  
O let her sorrows meet thy kind forbearance.

*Dei.* Let her then pass, and enter in the palace  
As most she list ; to her severer woes  
I would not add one pang : enough, alas !  
Her sufferings wound already. But let all  
Retire within the palace ; thou, to speed  
Where duty calls thee ;—I must straight prepare  
A worthy greeting for my much loved lord.

[*Exeunt* LICHAS and CAPTIVES.]

DEIANIRA, TRACHINIAN, CHORUS.

*Tra.* Nay, rest thou here a moment, that, from  
these  
Apart, thou first mayst learn on whom thy roof  
Bestows a refuge, which thou hast not heard,

Yet much imports to hear. I have of all  
A full and certain knowledge.

*Dei.* And what hast thou,  
Thus to arrest our step?

*Tra.* Remain and hear me.  
My former tidings were not lightly breathed;  
Nor will I now delude thee.

*Dei.* Wouldst thou then  
I called the herald hither; or alone,  
To me and to these virgins wouldst thou speak?

*Tra.* Nought hinders me to speak with these  
and thee,  
But let the rest depart.

*Dei.* They have departed;  
And now thy news unfold.

*Tra.* In all that late  
This Lichas said, he passed the bounds of truth.  
Or he is now most faithless; or at first  
He came a lying herald.

*Dei.* Sayst thou so?  
Unfold the purport of thy dubious speech,  
For all as yet is strange and most obscure.

*Tra.* I heard this man affirm, and numbers there  
Were present to attest it, that thy lord,  
For love of this sweet maid, slew Eurytus,

And stormed the strong Œchalia. Love alone,  
Of all the Gods, impelled him to the combat.  
He was no slave in Lydia,—no base tool  
Of Omphale; nor was the hapless youth,  
Whom from the rock he hurled, the fated cause,  
As this dissembler feigns; assigning thus  
A specious pretext for the Hero's fall.  
But when thy lord in vain her father prayed  
To give his daughter to his arms in secret,  
Some trivial plea of enmity he feigned,  
And warred against her country,—slew the King  
Her sire, and razed the city to the dust.  
Now, as thou seest, he sends her to thy halls  
Not unregarded, nor in captive guise.  
Believe it not, dear Lady! 'tis opposed  
To reason; since his heart beats high with love.  
I deemed it fitting to declare the whole  
To thee, O Queen, e'en as I chanced to hear it;  
And, in the concourse of Trachinia's sons,  
Numbers, as I, were conscious to the tale,  
And will confirm it. If my words be harsh,  
I grieve to wound thee, yet I speak the truth.

*Dei.* Wretch that I am! what ills are gathering  
round me,—

What latent plague beneath my very roof

Unconscious have I sheltered. Wretched me!  
Was she without a nation or a name,  
As the base wretch who led her falsely swore,  
In form so stately and in face so fair?

*Tra.* Her father was King Eurytus,—her name  
Is Iole; yet nought could he reveal—  
Right trusty herald!—he forbore to ask it!

*Ch.* I would not call down vengeance on all  
crimes;

But when such baseness with unseemly art  
Is glossed and varnished, let the traitor perish.

*Dei.* What, Virgins, shall I do? Struck with amaze  
At this sad tale, ten thousand fears distract me.

*Ch.* Question the herald; he in open terms  
Perchance may speak the whole, if force constrain  
him.

*Dei.* I go: thy counsel is on wisdom built.

*Ch.* Shall we remain, or what are thy com-  
mands?

*Dei.* Remain. The man, unsummoned by our  
train,

Spontaneous now is issuing from the palace.

*Enter* LICHAS.

LICHAS, DEIANIRA, CHORUS, TRACHINIAN.

*Li.* What greeting, Lady, should I bear from  
thee

To thy loved Hercules. Speak now thy will;  
Thou seest me straight departing.

*Dei.* Art thou then,  
Absent so long, thus ardent to depart,  
Ere we have fully questioned of thy lord?

*Li.* If thou hast aught to question, I am here.

*Dei.* And wilt thou answer with unvarying truth?

*Li.* Far as I know, great Jove attest my faith.

*Dei.* Who is this captive, whom thou broughtest  
hither?

*Li.* Eubœa is her country;— of her race  
Nought can I tell thee.

*Tra.* Villain, look on me.  
Art thou aware to whom these words are breathed?

*Li.* And why of me dost thou demand such  
question?

*Tra.* First, if thou dar'st, reply to what I ask  
thee.

*Li.* To my most honoured Lady, Deianira,  
Daughter of Æneus, wife of Hercules,

My noble mistress, or mine eyes deceive me.

*Tra.* The answer this I sought. Thou dost confess

She is thy mistress?—

*Li.* Yea; with strictest justice.

*Tra.* What then?—what fitting vengeance should requite thee,

If to thy mistress thou be found a traitor?

*Li.* And how a traitor? What base wiles are these?

*Tra.* None; thine own deeds evince the greater baseness.

*Li.* I go; so long to listen was unwise.

*Tra.* Nay, not at least till my demand be answered!

*Li.* Ask what thou wilt, since thine ungoverned tongue

Spurns all restraint.

*Tra.* Know'st thou the captive, then,  
Whom hither thou hast brought?

*Li.* I know her not.

What prompts th' inquiry?

*Tra.* Didst thou not affirm,  
This slave—whose name, forsooth, thou canst not tell—



Was Iole, the child of Eurytus?

*Li.* And where affirm it? Whom canst thou  
adduce

Such charge to witness?

*Tra.* Numbers of our state;—  
Crowds in the mid Trachinian forum heard  
Thy narrative.

*Li.* I own it. I declared  
So I at least had heard; but vague report  
Is not the firm assurance of a fact.

*Tra.* Why prate of vague report? Didst thou  
not say,  
Nay, swear thou brought'st the bride of Hercules?

*Li.* I brought his bride?—Speak, Lady, by the  
Gods!

Who is this babbling stranger?

*Tra.* One who heard thee,—  
In person heard thee say, for love of her  
He sacked the city; not to vengeance roused  
By the insulting Lydian. Love alone  
Impelled him to the deed.

*Li.* Hence with the fool,  
O Queen! to trifle with a brain diseased  
But ill becomes the wise.

*Dei.* Nay, but by Him

Who rolls dread thunders through the shadowy groves  
On Ceta's brow, I charge thee, seek no more  
To hide the truth from me. Thou wilt not speak  
To a weak woman, or to one untaught  
Of man's estate ; that in the same delights  
He finds not always gladness. He who strives  
With mightier Love, and lifts th' opposing hand,  
Is void of wisdom. O'er th' immortal Gods  
Love lords it at his will ;—he rules *my* breast,  
And wherefore not another's, framed as mine ?  
Should I condemn my husband, by such flame  
Possessed, or censure this unconscious maid,  
Who works no evil,—no disgrace to me,  
I were indeed of prudence all bereft.  
It is not thus. But, if thy Lord hath trained  
His servant to deception, thou hast learned  
No worthy lesson : if in such base lore  
Thou wert thine own instructor, when thy will  
Would show thee honest, thou wilt seem a traitor.  
Speak then th' unvarnished truth. To the free-born  
'Tis foulest stigma to be branded liar.  
To shun detection is a futile hope.  
Many to whom thou spak'st will tell the tale ;  
And if indeed thou fear'st, thy fears are vain,  
Since to be uninformed alone would grieve me.

To know—what evil? Hath not Hercules  
 Of other consorts been the only Lord ;  
 Yea, and of many : and did one receive,  
 At least from me, harsh words, or keen reproach?  
 Nor shall she meet them, though for her his breast  
 Glows with impassioned love. When first I gazed,  
 She roused my liveliest pity, for I knew  
 Her fatal beauty had but wrought her woe.  
 Most wretched, though reluctant, she hath plunged  
 Her state in ruin and herself in bondage.  
 Such thoughts,<sup>1</sup> I spurn them to the winds afar.  
 But thee, I charge, reserve thy fraud for others ;  
 Observe to me a never-swerving truth.

*Ch.* Obey the Queen, who counsels for thy good.  
 Thou wilt not soon repent, and mine esteem  
 Thou mayst regain.

*Li.* Most dear and honoured mistress,  
 Since I behold thee weighing human acts  
 With human sympathies, inspired by prudence,

<sup>1</sup> The propriety of this translation is dubious. The explanation of the scholiast, on which it rests, is decidedly reprehended by Blomfield, *Sept. apud Theb. Gloss. line 687*. The original, ἀλλὰ τὰυτα μὲν 'Ρέτω κατ' ὕδρον, may be literally rendered,—“ Let these things float with the stream.”

I will declare the truth, and nought conceal.  
 'Tis even thus, as thine informant tells thee :  
 Resistless love of her thy Lord inflamed,  
 And for her sake, by hostile spear subdued,  
 In one wide ruin sad Œchalia sunk.  
 These things, for of thy husband I must speak,  
 He nor enjoined me to conceal, nor did  
 Himself disown them ; I alone, dear Lady,  
 Fearing to wound thee with th' unwelcome tidings,  
 Erred, if indeed thou deem'st my fraud an error.  
 Now, since thou know'st the whole unvarnished  
     truth,  
 Not less for thy Lord's sake than for thine own,  
 Endure the maid with pity and with patience,  
 And prove by actions what thy words have pledged.  
 He, whose unmated prowess conquered all,  
 By love of her himself is vanquished now.

*Dei.* It is our settled purpose thus to act,  
 Nor will we court a <sup>2</sup> voluntary ill,

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<sup>2</sup> Νόσος γ' ἰπαιτὸν. It is difficult to discover the exact signification of the word ἰπαιτὸν. By some it is interpreted *extrinsecus invectum*, by others *peregrinum*, by others again *voluntarium*.

Contending with the Gods. But let us pass  
Within the house, that thou mayst bear to him  
Our letters, and the gifts we would return  
For his rich presents.—Bear them to my Lord—  
Thou must not part unhonoured with a gift,  
Who can'st attended by so rich a train.

[*Ereunt* DEIANIRA and LICHAS.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE.

Unconquered is the matchless might  
Of Venus. Though I may not sing  
How she beguiled th' Olympian King,  
And the dark Power of Stygian Night;  
Or Him whose wild waves roar,  
And shake the solid shore;—  
Yet rivals twain for this sweet bride  
In desperate fray encountering strove,  
Till wounds and dusty toil decide  
The guerdon of her love.

## ANTISTROPHE.

The haughty Tyrant of the Flood,  
Stern Achelöus rushed to fight;  
Like a wild bull in form and might,  
With towering horns the Monster stood ;—  
From Bacchic Thebes alone  
Rushed forth Jove's warrior-son ;  
Wielding the bow—the club—the spear ;—  
Thus closed they—ardent for the bride,  
While lone she sat and lovely there,  
The Venus to decide.

## EPODE.

And then and there rose mingling sound  
Of bows and crashing horns around ;  
Foe twines with foe in hate's close grasp,  
While many a groan and panting gasp  
Bursts from each breast, as brow to brow  
They meet in full encounter now.  
Mean time the gentle virgin fair  
On a green bank conspicuous sate,  
Waiting her destined bridegroom there ;—  
(Thus matrons old the tale relate,)

That eye, whose beauty fired the fray,  
Gazed on the strife in tearful dread,  
Till from her mother's arms away  
His beauteous prize the exultant victor led.

## DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

*Dei.* While, gentle virgins, our brief guest within  
Gives his last greeting to the captive train,  
Impatient to depart;—to you I steal  
Unseen, to tell what scheme these hands have  
framed,

And claim your pity for the woes I feel.  
Her whom I late received, I deem no more  
A virgin, but my lord's affianced wife ;  
And, as his freight the mariner admits,  
So I give entrance to my soul's despair.  
Now on one bridal couch, one lord's embrace  
We both await,—such worthy recompense  
The true and noble Hercules—so named—  
Awards me now for long and ceaseless care.  
Yet not his love my keen resentment wakes,  
Oft in this weakness hath he sunk before—

'But oh! to dwell with her—with her to share  
The rights once all mine own—what woman's heart  
Can tamely brook? I see her vernal grace  
Ripening to pure and perfect loveliness,  
Mine own decaying fast; on that the eye  
Is wont to dwell delighted, while from this  
Turns the reluctant step. Hence, much I fear  
Lest, while the empty honours of a wife  
I share, the glad reality be hers.  
Yet not e'en this, as I declared, should rouse  
To wrath a prudent woman. Now, dear virgins,  
What hope remains to soften my despair,  
I will inform you. In a brazen vase,  
With wariest care secluded, I have long  
Preserved the shaggy Centaur's ancient gift,  
Which in my youth's first blossom I received  
From hoary Nessus, dying with keen wound,  
What time he used o'er deep Evenus' flood  
To bear for hire the traveller in his hands,

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<sup>3</sup> Aye, if he speak my name with his fond voice,  
It will be with the same tone, that to her  
He murmured hers—it will be, or 'twill seem so.  
If he embrace me, 'twill be with those arms  
In which he folded her.—Milman, Fazio.



Not by strong oar, nor sails of rapid bark.  
When first departing from my native towers,  
I followed great Alcides as his bride,  
The monster bore me o'er; but when he reached  
The midst afar, his wanton hands transgressed;  
I shrieked aloud, and straight the son of Jove  
Turned to the spot, and from his sounding bow  
Sped the swift shaft;—it hissed unerring on,  
• <sup>4</sup> And struck the monster with a mortal blow,  
Who thus in death addressed me;—" Child of Æneus,  
" So thou observe my counsel, thou shalt reap  
" High profit from my death, since thee the last  
" Of mortal race these hands their freight have  
borne.  
" If thou preserve the stiff and clotted gore  
" That round my wound congeals, where hangs this  
shaft,  
" In the black blood of Lerna's hydra steeped,  
" For ever changeless shall it bind to thine  
" The soul of Hercules, that ne'er his love  
" Shall burn to others as it burns to thee."  
This, friendly virgins, hath my soul recalled;

---

<sup>4</sup> Literally, And it whizzed through the lungs of his breast.

And since that hour I have preserved his gift  
Hid in the palace. I have steeped this robe,  
Applying all he bade me,—all is done.  
Unhallowed arts I never,—never knew,  
Nor seek to know them; for I scorn such baseness:  
But by these spells could I transcend the charms  
Of this young beauty, and revive the love  
Of Hercules—the deed were well essayed,  
If ye approve my purpose,—and if not,  
I will forbear the act.

*Ch.* If thou hast aught  
Of faith in such design, I fain must think  
Thou hast not counselled ill.

*Dei.* Thus far alone  
My faith extends: I can but think it true.  
Experience hath not yet confirmed the fact.

*Ch.* Proceed then to the act; for though thy  
trust  
Be firm, if unessay'd, thou canst not prove it.

*Dei.* Ere long we shall be taught; for, lo! I see  
Yon herald quit the house,—he comes with speed.  
But be our secret kept; for guilt itself,  
If wrought in darkness, oft escapes dishonour.

*Enter LICHAS.*

LICHAS, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

*Li.* Daughter of Æneus, promptly speak thy will ;

Too far already is our stay prolonged.

*Dei.* Such errand, Lichas, hath engrossed my care,

While thou within heldst converse with the strangers ;

That thou mayst bear this richly woven robe,

Wrought by my hand, a present to thy Lord ;

And, ere thou give it, say, in that fair vest

No mortal form, save his, may be arrayed ;

Let not the sun's resplendent beam glance o'er it,  
Nor flame from hallowed altars, nor bright hearth,  
Till he, enrobed in visible pomp, shall stand  
Before the Gods on sacrificial day.

Such was our vow, if ever in these halls

We saw him living,—heard of his return,—

That, duly robed in this resplendent vest,

He should stand forth, and to the Gods display

A new adorer clad in new attire.

Bear too this token, this familiar seal,

Which at a glance thy Lord will recognise.

Away ;—discharge thine office well, nor aught  
Presume beyond thine orders. Do thine errand.  
So from one faithful service shalt thou win  
A double meed, my favour and thy master's.

*Li.* If right the herald's heaven-taught charge  
I know,

In nought, O Lady, will I pass thy word :  
But this sealed chest, e'en as thou giv'st, present;  
And with unvarying truth report thy message.

*Dei.* Depart then on thine errand. Well thou  
know'st

The royal state and service of our house.

*Li.* I know : and shall report that all is well.

*Dei.* Thou know'st, for thou hast witnessed,  
with what kind

And courteous greeting I received this maid.

*Li.* Such, that mine heart exulted at the sight.

*Dei.* Aught else shouldst thou relate? Alas! I  
deem

Thou to thy Lord mayst bear my tenderest love,  
Ere bring like token of his love to me.

[*Exit* LICHAS.]

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

O ye who dwell on Œta's brow,  
 Where tepid rills are gushing;  
 To swell the genial baths below,  
 From rocky fissures rushing;—  
 Ye who on Melia's hallowed shore,  
 Swayed by the golden-quivered Power,  
 Reside;—where Greece, to grave debate,  
 Convenes the sages of her state;<sup>s</sup>—

ANTISTROPHE I.

To you no more the flute shall raise  
 The dirge-like strain of sadness;  
 But emulate, with loftier lays,  
 The lyre's celestial gladness:

<sup>s</sup> The Amphictyonic council, consisting of delegates from certain of the states of Greece, invested with the charge of the public interests, was accustomed to meet twice a year; in the spring at Delphi, and in the autumn at Thermopylæ, near Melia. Demosthenes cites a decree, wherein the Amphictyonic council is called τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων συνέδριον.

The son of Jove, Alcmena's son,  
His last and deadliest conflict won;  
While Virtue decks his trophied brow  
With laurels, homeward speeds him now.

STROPHE II.

Twelve lingering months rolled slowly on,  
Yet, distant o'er the main  
The chief delayed, his doom unknown ;—  
In hopeless—heartless pain,  
Wept his lone consort ; her fond breast  
Ne'er found a solace or a rest,  
Till Mars, by wild desire possessed,  
Closed all our toils again.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Come then, O come,—let every oar  
Thy gallant bark impel ;  
Soon let it greet our gladdening shore,  
And bid yon isle farewell,  
Whence now the incensed fumes arise ;—  
Speed—speed, till eve invests the skies,  
Robed in the vest Persuasion dyes,  
The Centaur's mystic spell.

*Enter* DEIANIRA.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

*Dei.* I tremble, virgins, lest my late emprise  
Hath passed the bounds of wisdom and of right.

*Ch.* Daughter of Æneus, what import thy words?

*Dei.* I know not yet; but much, I fear, ere long  
I shall be proved, by honest hopes impelled,  
To deeds of ill.

*Ch.* Thou speak'st not of the gift  
Which thou hast sent to Hercules?—

*Dei.* I do.

O never—never more will I advise  
The prompt performance of a dubious deed!

*Ch.* Tell us, if thou mayst tell, whence spring  
thy fears?

*Dei.* That which hath chanced, my friends, is  
passing strange,  
Fraught with mysterious horror and dark presage.  
The light wool, severed from a snow-white sheep,  
With which but now I tinged the glittering robe,  
Hath passed in air; not by th' attendant train  
Consumed, but self-corroded,—shrunk in dust,  
And loosely crumbled on the vacant stone.  
But I will speak more largely, that to thee

May be explained the tenor of the deed.  
Of all the Centaur charged me, as he writhed  
In mortal anguish, by that shaft transfix'd,  
Nought have I passed unheeded; but retained,  
Like characters indelibly impressed  
On brazen tablets, all. Thus he enjoined,  
And thus have I fulfilled it. I have kept  
The mystic unguent unapproach'd by flame,—  
Untouch'd by day's warm splendour, close conceal'd  
In deep and dark recesses, till the time  
When I should tinge the fresh-anointed robe.  
Thus have I done. And now, when need required,  
Alone within, I spread it o'er the vest  
With wool, just severed from a slaughtered sheep;  
Then in a hollow chest enclosed the gift,  
Screened from the scorching sunbeam, as ye saw.  
But when again within our halls I turned,  
A sight of horror met my shuddering gaze;—  
Nor words can paint it, nor can thought conceive.  
It chanced, the wool, with which I tinged the vest,  
When thrown on earth, fell mid the noon-tide blaze,  
Where played the sun's warm beams; and when it felt  
That genial ray, dissolved I know not how,  
And o'er the ground was scattered, light as dust  
Which falls from wood, dissevered by the saw.



Thus to the earth it fell ; and where on earth  
It lay, a strangely-swelling froth arose,  
Dark as the purple juice of the rich grape  
In Autumn, bursting from the Bacchic vine.  
Wretch that I am ! I know not what to think :  
But see too plainly I have done a deed  
Of horror. Wherefore should the dying Centaur  
Regard with kindness her who caused his death ?  
It cannot be ; but ardent to destroy  
The foe, who pierced him, he hath thus beguiled  
me ;—

Which, ah ! I know too late, when the sad truth  
Can nought avail. I, yes, and I alone,  
Or visionary fears deceive my mind,  
Have caused the hero's downfall. Ah ! I know  
The godlike Chiron maddened with the pain  
Of that black venom, when the arrow pierced him.  
All things that live are blasted by its touch.  
How then, O how, shall the envenomed gore  
Which flowed from that false Centaur, spare my Lord ?  
Like doom will soon be his, if right I deem.  
But should he perish, 'tis my firm resolve  
That we will die together. To survive  
With infamy's dark spot upon my name,  
From me were most abhorrent, who prefer

To all beside a soul that scorns dishonour.

*Ch.* From deeds of horror dread must needs arise ;  
But lose not hope ere yet thou know the end.

*Dei.* Alas ! there is no hope in evil counsels ;  
No cheering hope to rouse a glad reliance.

*Ch.* And yet to those unwittingly who err  
Is anger lenient ; and if thou hast erred,  
Such error hath been thine.

*Dei.* So one may speak  
Who shares not in the wrong,—on whom the weight  
Of conscious evil doth not press. . . .

*Ch.* But now . . . .  
Suppress the rest, unless thou wouldst disclose  
Aught of the fatal secret to thy son.  
He comes, who went before to seek his father.

*Enter* HYLLUS.

HYLLUS, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

*Hyl.* O mother—would that one of these three lots  
Were mine to choose ! that thou wert now no more,  
Or, living still, didst call another son,  
Or couldst acquire a better frame of mind,  
Than now bears sway within thee.

*Dei.* O my son,  
What have I done to merit scorn like this?

*Hyl.* Know, thou hast slain on this accursed day  
Thy husband, and my father.

*Dei.* Woe is me !  
My son, what tale of horror dost thou bring ?

*Hyl.* A tale of that which cannot be undone.  
For who hath power o'er deeds, that once have birth,  
To bid them be as they had never been?

*Dei.* What hast thou said, my son? By whom  
informed  
Com'st thou to charge me with a crime so hateful?

*Hyl.* Nay, with these eyes I saw the piercing  
pangs  
That wrung my father—'twas no vague report,  
No idle rumour.

*Dei.* Where didst thou behold,  
Where stand in presence of thy noble father ?

*Hyl.* If thou must hear it, I will tell thee all.  
When from the wreck of famed Æchalia's towers  
He came, with victory's trophies richly graced,  
And victims for the Gods ;—high o'er the strand  
Of steep Eubœa rises a rude rock,  
Stemming the onward sea, Cenæum called ;—  
There to his Father Jove he rears a shrine,

<sup>6</sup> And consecrates a grove ; with ardent joy  
 I first beheld him there. While now in act  
 To slay the numerous victims, from his home  
 The herald Lichas in that instant came,  
 Bearing thy gift, the death-impregnate robe.  
 In this arrayed, as thou hadst straitly charged,  
 He slew the victims—twelve selected bulls,  
 The noblest of the spoil—and mingled there  
 A hecatomb of meaner sacrifice.  
 At first th' unhappy hero, glad in soul,  
 And in his vest exulting, paid his vows ;—  
 But when th' ensanguined flame arose on high,  
 From the rich offerings and the unctuous wood,  
 Soon from his skin burst forth the copious sweat,  
 And, as by dexterous artist firmly fixed,  
 To his whole body clung that deadly robe ;  
 Till shooting anguish thrilled in every bone,  
 Rending his frame convulsive. When at length,  
 The fiery venom of the viperous foe

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<sup>6</sup> Τεμενίαν τε φυλλάδα, literally, the leafy foliage of a grove.  
 On all sacred solemnities, the altars were crowned with  
 branches :—

Nos delubra Deum miseri, quibus ultimus esset  
 Ille dies, festa velamus fronde per urbem.

Virg. *Æn.* ii. 248.

Shot burning through his veins, he sternly asked  
Th' ill-fated Lichas,—of thy treacherous deed  
In all unconscious,—with what base intent  
He brought the robe?—Unknowing aught of ill,  
The hapless herald answered—'Twas thy gift  
Alone, and, as he brought it, sent by thee.  
He, at the word, infuriate with the pangs  
That tore his frame asunder, by the foot,  
Where bends the ankle, grasped the hapless wretch,  
And dashed him on the wave-encompassed rock ;  
Then from his shattered head poured mingling down  
A hideous mass of brains and gushing blood.  
The countless concourse raised a bitter cry  
For him who maddened, and for him who died ;—  
But none might venture to approach the hero.  
Wild with his pangs, he prostrate fell to earth,  
Now stood erect, still shrieking. The high rocks  
His groans resounded ;—Locris' sylvan crags,  
And wide Eubœa's promontories steep.  
When he grew faint with anguish, oft on earth  
The sufferer dashed his frame, and ceaseless raised  
Shouts of deep wailing, mingling stern reproach  
On thy unhappy couch, the nuptial tie  
Of Æneus, whence this fell destruction sprung.  
Then raising through the mist that darkened round

His dim distorted eye, it fell on me,  
Weeping amidst the crowd; he looked—and called  
me:

“ Approach, my son! Oh fly not my despair,  
Forsake me not, though we should die together;  
But raise me, raise, and bear me to some spot  
Where mortal eye may never more behold me.  
If thou hast aught of pity, bear me far,  
At least from this loathed region, ere I die.”  
Such aid imploring, in the bark we placed,  
But scarce could bear him to the destined strand,  
Convulsed with deadliest pangs; and here, ere long,  
Wilt thou behold him living, or in death.  
Such were thy counsels, mother, such thy deeds  
To my poor father; for which traitorous acts  
May penal Justice and th’ avenging Furies  
Meet recompense award thee. Thus I pray,  
If it be lawful—lawful it *must* be,  
Since every law towards me thyself hast spurned,  
And slain the best and bravest of mankind,  
One on whose like thou ne’er shalt look again.

[*Exit* DEIANIRA.

*Ch.* Why steal away in silence?—Knowst thou not  
This mute forbearance half confirms the charge?

*Hyl.* Nay, let her hence, and may the rising  
winds

Far, far convey her from my loathing sight.

Why cherish still a mother's empty name

For her who acts not a true mother's part?

Let her away in triumph—such delight

As to my sire she gave, requite her baseness!

[*Exit* HYLLUS.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

Behold, dear virgins, with what fatal speed

The ancient oracle of Heaven

Hastes to its dread fulfilment driven;—

“ When the revolving months,” so Fate decreed,

“ Had crowned the twelfth long year,

“ Rest from his toils severe

“ The son of Jove should win ;”—firm to its end

Doth the sure presage tend :

Who wakes to life and light no more,

His earthly toils are closed—his earthly bondage

o'er.

## . ANTISTROPHE I.

If in that vest, as in a bloody cloud  
Involved, the Centaur's hate he mourns ;—  
If in his side the venom burns  
Which, fraught with death, from that fell Hydra  
          flowed ;—

How shall yon sun display  
Another orient day  
To him, thus tortured by that ruthless pest ;  
And in whose burning breast  
Dark Nessus, with dissembling art,  
And guileful words hath fixed th' intolerable smart?

## STROPHE II.

Such wiles th' unhappy Queen essayed,  
When o'er her house, from those new nuptials  
          sprung,  
Impending miseries hung,  
Nor dreamt, alas ! by fraudulent words betrayed,  
For her loved Lord the deadly snare was laid.  
Now, plunged in agony severe,  
Down her sad cheek th' incessant tear  
Of hopeless misery steals ;  
While, hastening to its destined close,



Fate sternly points to heavier woes,  
And darker curse reveals.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

The fount of tears is bursting now,  
The infection spreads:—Ye Gods! from adverse  
    might,  
Ne'er did such ills excite  
Our liveliest pity for Alcides' woe.  
Weep for that spear, triumphant o'er the foe,  
Which from Æchalia's hoary height  
Bore the young bride, in beauty bright  
The victor's lovely meed!  
'Twas Venus, who in silence wrought  
That spell with fearful issue fraught,  
And her's the fatal deed!

*Semich.* Ah! do my fears deceive, or do I hear  
Fresh lamentations bursting forth within?  
What shall I say?—

*Semich.* No dubious sound, but wail of deepest  
    woe

It seems—new sorrows are unfolding there.

*Semich.* Mark, with what clouded brow and awe-  
    struck air

Yon aged nurse approaches to inform us.

*Enter* MATRON.

MATRON, CHORUS.

*Mat.* What evils, O my children! hath the gift  
Sent to Alcides, on this house entailed!

*Ch.* What new affliction bringst thou, aged  
mother?

*Mat.* The last of ways hath Deianira trod;—  
That too with stedfast and unfaltering foot.

*Ch.* Thou canst not mean of death?

*Mat.* Thou hast heard all.

*Ch.* Ah! is she dead indeed?

*Mat.* Thou hear'st once more.

*Ch.* Unhappy Queen! how dost thou say she died?

*Mat.* In utter desperation was the deed!

*Ch.* Say, mother, by what doom she fell?

*Mat.* By her own ruthless hand.

*Ch.* Did rage, or frenzy—

*Mat.* 'Twas a weapon's point  
The wound inflicted.

*Ch.* How did she contrive  
The deadly act?

*Mat.* Redoubling death on death, alone she pierced  
Her bosom with the sword.

*Ch.* And saw'st thou the infuriate deed ?

*Mat.* I saw, for at her side I stood.

*Ch.* How ? how ? Recount the whole !

*Mat.* I said her own rash hand performed the  
deed.

*Ch.* What dost thou say ?

*Mat.* The clear and certain truth.

*Ch.* Alas ! the new affianced bride  
A vengeful Fury hath produced  
To this devoted house !

*Mat.* Too true indeed ! But hadst thou marked  
the scene

Which I have witnessed, soon thine heart would melt  
In deeper, livelier pity.

*Ch.* How, alas !

Could woman's hand achieve so wild a deed ?

*Mat.* Aye, 'twas a deed of horror—hear my tale,  
And then attest my truth. When first within  
Alone she went, and in the halls beheld  
Her sorrowing son the covered couch prepare,  
As hastening to return and meet his sire,  
She shrunk away where none might trace her pre-  
sence :

Then, prostrate at the altars, wailed aloud  
Her widowed state, and ever as she touched  
’ Works which, in happier days, her hands had  
wrought,

Fresh tears of grief and agony gushed forth.  
Thus, as she roved distracted through the palace,  
If chance her eye some loved domestic caught,  
Again she wept in anguish at the sight,  
Her hapless doom deploring; and her house,  
Alas ! from henceforth and for ever childless.  
When from these complaints she ceased, I saw her  
next,

With sudden impulse, to the chamber rush  
Of her Alcides ;—latent near I lay,  
And with observant eye kept ceaseless watch,  
And marked th’ unhappy Lady fondly strew  
The outspread garments on the hero’s bed ;  
This mournful task fulfilled, upon the couch  
She wildly sprung, and sad reclining there,  
With a quick flood of passionate tears, exclaimed—  
“ O thou beloved couch, my bridal bed,  
“ Farewell, farewell, for ever ! never more

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<sup>1</sup> *Ὀργάνων*,—literally, tools or implements of work.

“ Shalt thou receive me to thy soft repose.”

Lamenting thus, with hasty hand she loosed  
Her robe, where shone the bright clasp on her breast,  
And her left shoulder, with her side, laid bare.  
I rushed, with hurried step, swift as the strength  
Of faltering age allowed, to tell her son  
What desperate deed she planned ; but while we  
haste

With hurried footsteps in uncertain dread,  
Deep in her side the two-edged sword we saw ;—  
The point had pierced her vitals. At the sight  
Her son lamented, for he knew in wrath  
The wretched sufferer struck that mortal blow ;  
Too late apprized by others, how she wrought  
That deed, unconscious of the Centaur's wile.  
Then, then indeed the hapless youth bursts forth  
In loud repentant wailings ; on her lips  
Imprints vain kisses—by her side outstretched  
Lamenting lies in anguish, mourning much  
That he had rashly wronged her with a charge  
Of foulest baseness ; late deploring now  
That by one stroke of two most tender parents  
He is bereft. Such deeds are wrought within,  
And who from henceforth shall presume to count  
But on *one* day of life, I hold unwise ;

To-morrow is not in the grasp of man,  
Until the present sun go down in safety.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE AND ANTISTROPHE I.

Which miseries claim mine earliest tear,  
Which fraught with anguish most severe?  
My sorrowing soul explores in vain!  
These in yon palace I descry,  
And those await th' expectant eye,—  
To feel or fear is equal pain.

STROPHE II.

O that some tempest wind,  
From these devoted towers would rise,  
And waft me far to foreign skies,  
Lest with distracted mind  
When I behold Jove's martial son,  
I perish at the sight alone!  
Homeward, they say, the chief returns;  
While in his breast, returned to die,  
Th' immedicable fever burns,  
A marvel in his agony!

## ANTISTROPHE II.

'Tis not for distant woe  
 I pour lone Philomel's sad strain;  
 Advancing lo! a stranger-train:—  
 Bear they the Chieftain now?  
 With slow and noiseless step they wend,  
 As watchful o'er a suffering friend.  
 Ah! he is borne, in silence deep  
 Reclined;—nor can I yet explore  
 If his dread pangs are soothed in sleep,  
 Or stilled in death for evermore.

HERCULES, BORNE BY ATTENDANTS, HYLLUS,

CHORUS.

*Hyl.* Alas! alas for thee,  
 My father! how thy sufferings rend my heart!  
 What shall I do? how aid thee?—Misery!

*Att.* Hush, hush, my son, nor thus revive  
 Thy frenzied father's maddening pain;  
 He lives, though soon to die. Close, close thy lips  
 In resolute silence.

*Hyl.* Dost thou say he lives?

*Att.* Thou wouldst not wake him, now in sleep  
enchained,

My son, nor in his breast revive  
That keen distracting malady.

*Hyl.* Nay ; but my frenzied mind  
Is struggling with intolerable woe.

*Herc.* O Jove !

Ah whither am I borne ? with whom  
Of mortals, racked with ceaseless pangs,  
Am I now laid ? Woe, woe, unhappy me !  
Again the fever burns—alas ! again.

*Att.* Hadst thou not learnt 'twere better far  
To bear in silence, than dispel  
Sleep from his heavy lids and throbbing brow ?

*Hyl.* Ah ! how could I endure  
To gaze in silence on a sight like this ?

*Herc.* Ye altars, hallowed on the brow  
Of high Cenæum's steep,  
For victims slain what meed have ye repaid  
To me, a wretch accursed ?  
O Jove !

What shame, ah ! what hast thou imposed ?—  
Oh had I never with these eyes  
Beheld it ;—this immitigable wrath  
Of frenzy never in my soul perceived !



What charmed strain—what healing hand,  
Save thine, Eternal Sire, can soothe  
These ever-gnawing pangs to rest?  
O could I hail, far off, such marvel now!  
O agony! away, away,  
And leave me,—leave the wretched to repose,—  
Yes; leave me to my doom.  
Where dost thou touch?—Where lay me now?  
Ah! thou wilt kill, wilt kill me—thou hast  
roused

The pang that seemed to sleep.  
O how thy very touch  
Shoots anguish through my frame,—again  
The fell disease steals on me. Where are ye  
O most unjust of Greece, for whom full oft  
Have I, engaged with monsters on the wave  
And in all forest wilds, emperilled life;  
Yet, in mine anguish, none will bring me now  
Or fire, or welcome sword; no hand  
Will grant me glad release  
From this accursed life!  
Woe, woe, unutterable woe!

*Att.* Son of the hero!—this sad task transcends  
My feeble frame; aid thou; to his relief  
Thine eye is quicker.

*Hyl.* I indeed support him ;—  
But to relieve his pangs, around, within,  
I see no helper—Jove alone can aid us.

*Herc.* Where art thou, O my son, my son !  
Here, stay me here, and raise my fainting frame.  
Ah miserable doom !  
Again it springs, it springs upon me now,  
Th' immedicable pest  
That drives me to the tomb !  
Pallas, again it maddens ! O my son,  
Have pity on thy father—bare thy sword—  
Strike—none can blame thee—heal the piercing pangs  
Thy impious mother caused, whom may I see  
Fall thus, e'en thus, as she hath wrought my fall.  
Brother of Jove, kind Hades, hear !  
Soothe, soothe me to repose ;—  
With swift-descending doom  
Compose the wretch in death !

*Ch.* How have I trembled but to hear the woes,  
Which wring the bosom of the suffering Hero.

*Herc.* I who with daring hand and vigorous frame  
Have wrought the matchless deeds no words can tell,  
Ah never yet from Jove's indignant Queen,  
Or the abhorred Eurystheus, have I met  
Such burning pangs as Ceneus' treacherous daughter

Enwove in this false net, this robe, the work  
Of vengeful Furies, which consumes me now.  
Adhering to my side, it hath devoured  
Th' external skin, and clinging fast within  
It drains the vital parts—the vigorous blood  
It hath absorbed, and withered all my frame,  
Bound fast in these inextricable toils.

This not th'embattled host, nor towering brood  
Of earth-begotten Titans, nor the might  
Of monsters fell, nor Greek, nor barbarous foe,  
Nor those untraversed regions, where I passed  
To rid the world of villains, e'er achieved ;—  
I fall not ev'n by man ; a woman's hand  
Slew me, unaided, and without a sword.  
Thou, then, my son, if thou indeed art mine,  
Revere no more thy mother's blighted name.  
O give her to my vengeance, by thy hand  
Dragged sternly forth—*thy* hand, that I may learn  
If thou lament her fall—or mine—more deeply,  
When thou shalt see my righteous vengeance smite  
her.

Come, O my son ! dare this. Ah ! pity me,  
Whom all must pity, wailing now in tears,  
Like a weak girl. Such, ere this fatal day,  
No mortal eye hath e'er beheld in me,

For all my sufferings never forced a groan,  
Though in these pangs I seem a very woman.  
Come now—beside thy dying father stand,  
Gaze on the plague that fires my soul to madness—  
I throw aside my vests—come all, and look—  
Look on this form, thus wofully consumed ;  
Behold mine anguish—pity my despair !  
Ah miserable me !

Again the pangs are on me, through my frame  
Again they thrill—this fell devouring pest  
Yields not a moment's pause from agony.  
King of the shades, receive me—  
Strike me, thou bolt of Jove.

O King, O Father, hurl thy lightning-dart  
Full on this head. Ah me, again it wakes,  
It burns, it maddens. O my hands, my hands,  
My back, my breast, my yet unconquered arms,  
Was it with you I slew Nemea's pest,  
Terror of flocks, the vast and tameless lion ?  
Was it your might that crushed the dragon-plague  
Of Lerna ;—and the troop—to mortal form  
Who joined the courser's fleetness, lawless—proud—  
Haughty in corporal might ;—did ye too slay  
The Erymanthian boar, and curb in chains  
The triple-headed guardian of the shades,



*Herc.* Speak what thou wilt, but briefly. Tortured thus,

I trace no meaning in thy measured words.

*Hyl.* 'Tis of my mother I approach to speak,  
Her present state, and most unwitting error.

*Herc.* O thou most shameless ! Dar'st thou but  
to name

Thy father's murderer, and must I too hear thee ?

*Hyl.* Silence at such a crisis ill becomes me.

*Herc.* It ill becomes thee on her former crimes—

*Hyl.* Thou wilt not call them by so harsh a name.

*Herc.* Speak—but beware lest thou be proved a  
villain.

*Hyl.* I speak. In recent death my mother lies.

*Herc.* By whom?—This wonder seems to verge  
on falsehood.

*Hyl.* By her own hand—no stranger struck the  
blow.

*Herc.* Ah ! ere she met her righteous meed from  
mine ?

*Hyl.* Thou wouldst restrain thy wrath, if all were  
told thee.

*Herc.* Thy words excite surprise—declare thy  
meaning.

*Hyl.* In the whole deed she erred—her thought  
was guiltless.

*Herc.* Guiltless, thou base one! Was thy father's  
death

A guiltless deed?

*Hyl.* Deeming by mystic charms  
To fix thy wandering love, she widely erred.

*Herc.* Who is of Trachis thus in magic skilled?

*Hyl.* The Centaur Nessus at his death beguiled her  
By this false philtre to inflame thy love.

*Herc.* Ah me, unhappy! now my doom is sealed.  
I die—I die—yon light is mine no more.

I see the fatal measure of my woe.

Come, O my son, thou hast no more a father;  
Summon thy brothers and my children hither;  
Call, too, the sad Alcmena—vainly styled  
The consort of high Jove; that all may hear  
My last portentous oracle of death.

*Hyl.* Thy mother is not here; but hence hath  
past,

And by the shore at Tiryns holds her court;  
Some of thy children share her fostering love,  
Some dwell in Thebes afar. We, who are here,  
In duteous care, my father, round thee stand,

To hear thy dying mandates, and obey them.

*Herc.* Thou then observe my charge ; 'tis now  
the time

To prove thy manly virtue, and assert

The honours of thy name, Alcides' son.

Long since my sire's sure oracle declared

That by no living mortal should I fall,

But by some habitant of Pluto's realm.

This, this is he, the Centaur ; this by Fate

Foretold ; who, long reposing with the dead,

Slew me, though living. Now will I reveal

New oracles, accordant with the old,

And a like doom denouncing, which I heard

What time I reached the Selli's sacred grove,

(A hardy race, who o'er the mountains roam,

And on the cold earth rest,) and from the oak

Of my great Father, on my tablets graved—

This very hour, it presaged, should appear

The close of all the toils by Fate assigned.

I dreamed of peace and gladness, while to me

It boded nought but death ; for toil no more

Invades the peaceful slumber of the tomb.

Since, then, the end is certain, O my son !

Befits thee now to lend thy willing aid,

Nor wait a sterner and more angry charge,



But yield thy help spontaneous, of all laws  
Deeming it noblest to obey thy father.

*Hyl.* Though, O my Father, with alarm I hear  
A charge like this, I will in all obey thee.

*Herc.* First give me thy right hand—in solemn  
pledge.

*Hyl.* Wherefore so warmly urge this pledge  
of faith?

*Herc.* Wilt thou not yield it quickly, nor with-  
stand

Thy father's pleasure?

*Hyl.* Lo! I give my hand,  
And will in nought refuse thee.

*Herc.* By the head  
Of Jove, my Father, swear.

*Hyl.* Swear to do what?  
Say this, and I assent.

*Herc.* Swear to perform  
The task I shall impose.

*Hyl.* Yea, I do swear,  
And call dread Jove to witness.

*Herc.* If thou'rt false,  
Invoke his wrath upon thee.

*Hyl.* That were needless;  
For I will do it—yet invoke the curse.

*Herc.* Know'st thou the brow of Cæta, dear to  
Jove ?

*Hyl.* I know. Oft have I there the victim slain.

*Herc.* Thither with thine own hand befits thee now  
To bear this body, with thy chosen friends ;—  
And stripping from the deeply-rooted oak  
Its branching honours, and the olive wild,  
Construct a pyre, and there my body place.  
Then, waving high the redly-blazing torch,  
Fire the vast pile—yet not a tear be shed—  
If thou art mine indeed, without a groan,  
Without a tear perform it ; and if not,  
Though with the dead, my curse shall track thy path,  
And hang most heavy on thy soul for ever.

*Hyl.* What hast thou said, my father ?—what  
enjoined ?

*Herc.* What thou must straight perform ;—if not,  
henceforth.

I am thy father, thou my son, no more.

*Hyl.* Ah ! to what deed of horror wouldst thou  
call me ?—

To be a murderer and a parricide !

*Herc.* To this I call thee not. Be but the balm,  
The only healer of thy father's pangs.

*Hyl.* How can I heal thee, lighting thus the pyre ?

*Herc.* If here thou shrink, at least fulfil the rest.

*Hyl.* I will not shrink to bear thee as thou said'st.

*Herc.* And as I charged thee, wilt thou rear the  
pile?

*Hyl.* So that my hands touch not the fatal flame,  
The rest I will perform—the task be mine.

*Herc.* This will suffice. Add now one trivial grace  
To dearer favours, and I part in peace.

*Hyl.* Though it were most momentous, I will do it.

*Herc.* Thou know'st the virgin-child of Eurytus.

*Hyl.* If right I deem, of Iole thou speakest.

*Herc.* The same. And thus, my son! do I com-  
mand thee.

When I am dead, if thou revere thy father,  
And art observant of thy filial oath,  
Make her thy bride, nor spurn thy sire's behest.  
No mortal save thyself should e'er espouse  
Th' affianced bride of Hercules. My son,  
Let her become thy consort—yield this grace—  
Though thou concede a greater, *this* denied,  
Thy whole assent is valueless.

*Hyl.* Alas!

Wrath ill befits in miseries like thine;  
But who can bear these wild and wayward ravings?

*Herc.* Thou wilt not then obey thy father's will?

*Hyl.* Nay, who, by vengeful Furies unconstrained,  
Could wed the author of a mother's death,  
A father's sufferings, keen and fierce as thine?  
Nay, nay, my father, rather let me die,  
Than live united to a foe so hateful.

*Herc.* This man, it seems, accounts a dying father  
Unworthy of regard. But Heaven's dread curse  
Shall surely wait thee, if thou still obey not.

*Hyl.* Alas! I deem ere long thou wilt confess  
The fell disease beguiled thee.

*Herc.* Thou alone  
Reviv'st the slumbering pangs.

*Hyl.* Wretch that I am!  
What doubts distract my soul!

*Herc.* And yet thy soul  
Disdains obedience to a father's bidding.

*Hyl.* And would my father teach an impious  
part?

*Herc.* It is not impious, if it be my pleasure.

*Hyl.* And canst thou then with justice thus com-  
mand me?

*Herc.* I can—and call the Gods to prove my truth.

*Hyl.* Then I will do it, nor resist thee more,  
Appealing to the Gods thy will constrained me.  
I cannot err, if I obey my father.

*Herc.* Well dost thou close. Now to thy favours add

One more—and promptly; ere returning pangs  
Drive me to madness, place me on the pyre.  
Come, haste, support me;—there of every toil  
The close awaits me.—Death is rest for all.

*Hyl.* There is no cause to linger, since thy charge,  
My father, bids—compels us to obey thee.

*Herc.* Come then, bold heart! and ere the pain  
Returns,—as with an adamantine curb  
Close, close my lips, that not a groan  
May force its way. This last sad task  
Is glad and welcome now.

*Hyl.* Raise him, attendants, and absolve  
Me from the guilt of this dark deed;—  
And, conscious of the fatal act,  
Ascribe th' injustice to the Gods;  
They gave him being—bear the name  
Of Fathers, yet can view his pangs unmoved.  
Fond man the future ne'er descries;  
To us with woe the present teems,  
And to the Gods with shame;  
But falls with heaviest shock the blow  
On him who bears these ills.

*Ch.* Nor ye, O virgins, in your homes remain ;  
Ye have beheld the mighty fall,  
Beheld these recent woes—unnumbered—strange :—  
But all were wrought by Jove's disposing hand.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*



# AJAX.

VOL. II.

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## AJAX.

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THE tragedy of Ajax is, perhaps, the least interesting, though by no means the least elaborate, among the dramas of Sophocles. We have already adverted to the very indifferent portraiture which it presents of the celebrated "Goddess of Wisdom," nor can it with safety be affirmed, that the deficiencies of the Divinity are, in this instance at least, counterbalanced by the excellencies of the Hero. With all the allowance which can be extended by the most indulgent reader to the repelling description of mental aberration, it cannot but be acknowledged, that the spectacle of the mighty and martial Ajax, committing nightly depredations upon

the flocks and herds, scourging and decapitating the unoffending and harmless rams, even under the impression that they were his mortal enemies,—to say the least—savours somewhat of the ludicrous. And it requires a more than ordinary exertion of the faculty of intellectual abstraction, so far to obliterate from the mind the remembrance of the Hero's degradation, as adequately to relish those beautiful passages which are interspersed throughout the play, contrasting the sublimity of terrific madness and resolute desperation with the mild, yet importunate, earnestness of the tenderest conjugal affection.

In this drama, also, the poet appears to have condescended more than usual in the artful introduction of passages, calculated only to produce stage effect. It is, or was some years since, the constant practice of a British audience to applaud most vociferously on any allusion to the glories of "Old England," however remote from, or inconsistent with, the business of the piece under representation. In like manner, it is to be imagined, was the noisy patriotism of an Athenian mob called forth by the encomiums of their native city. At least, it is difficult to account for the forced and

unnecessary recurrence of the same subject on any other supposition.

We shall, perhaps, be suspected of not entertaining even a proper and reasonable partiality for our author, if we proceed to notice a circumstance, which is only worthy of notice on account of its singularity — that in this drama Sophocles has descended to a pun ; a pun, uttered under the most agonizing circumstances, and uttered, too, by Ajax, who, according to the concurrent testimony of ancient authors, does not appear, at any time, to have enjoyed the reputation of a wit. It can hardly be urged, that these conceits in tragedy are either necessary or natural, though it is certain, that the poet who, of all others, has adhered most rigidly to nature, is most vehemently addicted to the practice of punning.

It is time, however, to enumerate some of the excellencies of this drama ; and, perhaps, it is not one of the least striking, that, in the delineation of the several personages, the poet has accurately preserved the Homeric character. The resolute, though somewhat brutal, hardihood of Ajax—the

contemptible malignity of Menelaus—the arbitrary selfishness of Agamemnon—and the supple versatility of that “much enduring” man, whose cold-calculating policy would never allow him to sin *gratuitously*, are admirably portrayed. We recognise at once the personages with whom we are so familiarly conversant; and recognise them in perfect consistence with those cherished prepossessions, the violation of which no originality could excuse.

Tecmessa is, unquestionably, a most interesting character. Her affection for Ajax combines the deep tenderness of a consort with the patient endurance of a slave; and her mild, yet earnest, remonstrances are not the less affecting, because Ajax, in the asperity of his replies, seems to remember that he is her master as well as her husband. It would, however, materially detract from the interest which we take in the amiable Phrygian, did we suppose, according to the interpretation of some translators, that the lord of her affections had been the murderer of her mother. The passage, however, upon which this notion is founded, as we shall notice in its proper place, appearing sus-

ceptible of a different rendering, we have not scrupled to adopt it, convinced that we have, at least, two powerful authorities in our favour,—reason and nature.

“ The scene is before the tent of Ajax, the last in station—so that it has the camp and fleet of the Grecians stretching along the shore to the west, a valley terminated by Mount Ida lying to the east.”

## **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

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**MINERVA.**

**ULYSSES.**

**AJAX.**

**CHORUS OF SALAMINIAN SAILORS.**

**TECMESSA.**

**MESSENGER.**

**TEUCER.**

**MENELAUS.**

**AGAMEMNON.**

## **MUTÆ PERSONÆ.**

**EURYSACES, SON OF AJAX.**

**TUTOR.**

**HERALD.**

# AJAX.

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MINERVA, ULYSSES.

*Min.* Son of Laertes, I have ever marked thee  
Forming some new attempt against thy foes,  
And now I see thee at the naval tent  
Of Ajax,<sup>1</sup> on the camp's remotest verge,  
Long keenly hunting, and with measured care  
Tracking his latest footsteps, if he be  
Without, or in the tent. Thine active search,  
True as the quick scent of the Spartan hound,  
Leads thee in season hither. He whom thus

---

<sup>1</sup> "E'en Ajax and Achilles heard the sound,  
Whose ships, remote, the guarded navy bound."  
Hom. Il. xi. 111.



Thou seek'st, is now within, his temples yet  
 Reeking with sweat, his hands distilling gore.  
 Within his gate no longer need'st thou pry;  
 But speak the purpose that impelled thy speed,  
 That thou mayst learn from one who knows the  
                   whole.

*Ulys.* O accents of Minerva, to my soul  
 Dearest of Powers immortal, how mine ear  
 Thy welcome voice perceives, and with my mind  
 I grasp the sounds, though thou art viewless still,  
 Clear as the Tuscan trumpet's<sup>2</sup> echoing clang!  
 Well dost thou know my circling steps pursue  
 A foe, bold Ajax of the massy shield;  
 Him, and no other, do I track so long.

<sup>2</sup> *Κώδων*, Tinnabulum: In its proper signification, a little bell, used in camps, at the sound of which the soldiers were expected to answer. When applied to a trumpet it denotes the bell or broad part. The Tuscan Trumpet, *Σάλπιγξ Τυρρηνίκη*, was invented by the Tyrrhenians: Its orifice was cleft, and sent forth an exceeding loud and shrill sound.

Tyrrhenusque tubæ mugire per æthera clangor.

Virg. *Æn.* viii. 526.

It may here be proper to remark, that when the Deities interposed in favour of mortals, they rarely became visible. Comp. Eurip. *Hippol.* 83–86.

This very night to us hath he achieved  
Deeds most unlooked for, if those deeds be his :  
For nought we clearly know, but wander lost  
In vague surmise. Spontaneous I incurred  
This arduous toil. We found but now the herds,  
The prize of battle, weltering in their blood ;  
Slain, with their keepers, by some ruthless hand.  
All charge the crime on Ajax : o'er the plain  
One who kept watch beheld him proudly stalk  
With lofty strides, and newly-reeking sword.  
He said, and proved it. I, by him apprized,  
Pursue the track ; some signs I clearly trace,—  
Some fill me with amazement,—and I learn  
No sure conclusion. In glad hour thou com'st,—  
My former acts were all inspired by thee ;  
Be thou director of my future deeds.

*Min.* I knew it well, Ulysses, and long since  
Came forth to guide thee in thy venturous path,  
Propitious to thy toils.

*Ulys.* Say, Queen beloved,  
Do I thus toil aright ?

*Min.* Thou dost ; this man  
Hath done the deed.

*Ulys.* What urged his raging hand  
To such strange acts of frenzy ?

*Min.* Fired by wrath  
For great Achilles' arms.

*Ulys.* Why rushed he thus  
On senseless cattle?

*Min.* In your blood he thought  
He then embrued his hand.

*Ulys.* Planned he this deed  
Against the Argives?

*Min.* Had I been remiss,  
He had achieved it.

*Ulys.* With what bold intent,  
What arrogance of soul?

*Min.* 'Gainst you he rushed  
Alone, a night-marauder!

*Ulys.* Did he reach  
E'en to his purposed goal?

*Min.* Yea; to the gates  
Of the two Chiefs he came.

*Ulys.* What still withheld  
His hand, intent on slaughter?

*Min.* To his sight,  
Raising intolerable fancies wild  
That cureless joy I checked,—and on the flocks  
I turned his wrath—the herdsmen's mingled charge,  
The spoils of battle, undivided still.

Rushing on these, throughout the horned droves  
He spread destruction, smiting all around ;  
Now fondly deemed he by his vengeful hand  
The two Atridæ fell ; then sought the rest,  
Now striking one—and now another chief.  
I urged him still, and lured to evil toils  
The man, misled by phrenzy's impulse wild.  
Next, when he rested from his murderous task,  
The oxen that survived in chains he bound ;  
And to his tent the herd upbraiding drove,  
Like men, the captives of his conquering spear.  
These fettered in his tent he scourges now.  
Nay, I will show thee his distempered mood,  
That to the Argives thou mayst bear the tale.  
Rest undismayed, nor as some dangerous ill  
Receive the man ; for I will turn aside  
His erring glance, nor shall he mark thy presence.—  
Hear, thou who bind'st thy captives' hands in chains,  
I call thee forth to meet me. Ho!—I call  
Ajax,—appear without thy tent before me.

*Ulys.* What wilt thou do, Minerva ? call him not !

*Min.* Wilt thou not rest in silence, and unawed ?

*Ulys.* Call him not forth, by Heaven ! but let  
him rest

Within.

*Min.* And wherefore? Was he not before—

*Ulys.* My foe, I own; and doubly hateful now.

*Min.* What laugh so sweet as that which scorns  
a foe?

*Ulys.* Enough for me that he remain within.

*Min.* And dost thou tremble to behold a madman?

*Ulys.* I ne'er had shunned him when in saner mood.

*Min.* He shall not see thee, though thou stand  
before him.

*Ulys.* How, if he views me with the self-same eyes?

*Min.* I will obscure perception, though he see.

*Ulys.* All things may happen, when a God  
directs.

*Min.* Stand now in silence where thou art.

*Ulys.* I stand.

I would I were afar.

*Min.* Ajax—come forth;

A second time I call thee. Wherefore thus  
Art thou unmindful of thy great ally?

*Enter AJAX.*

MINERVA, ULYSSES, AJAX.

*Aj.* Hail! O Minerva; daughter of high Jove,  
All hail! in happy moment art thou come!

Thee too with golden offerings will I crown  
For this glad booty.

*Min.* Thou hast spoken well.  
But tell me first, hast thou embrued thy sword  
Deep in the life-blood of the Argive host?

*Aj.* Such is my boast ; nor will I e'er disclaim  
The glorious deed.

*Min.* And hast thou raised thy spear  
Against th' Atridæ?

*Aj.* So that never more  
Shall they dishonour Ajax !

*Min.* If I hear  
Aright, the men are dead.

*Aj.* Aye ; let the dead  
Now rob me of mine arms.

*Min.* 'Tis well : and where  
Is now Laertes' son ? What doom is his ?  
Hath he escaped thy vengeance ?

*Aj.* Dost thou ask  
Of that insidious villain ?

*Min.* Of the same—  
I mean Ulysses, thy detested rival.

*Aj.* Fettered he sits within, a welcome sight.  
Death is a boon I will not grant him yet.

*Min.* What wilt thou do, what further vantage win?

*Aj.* First to the columns of my hall fast-bound —

*Min.* What ill design'st thou to th' unhappy wretch?

*Aj.* This scourge shall mark him deeply ere he die.

*Min.* Nay, do not thus at least insult the foe.

*Aj.* In all beside thy pleasure shall prevail;  
But he shall bear this vengeance, this alone.

*Min.* Thou, then, since it delights thee thus to act,

Indulge thy hand, nought of thy purpose spare.

*Aj.* I hasten to the task; but pray thee first,  
Ever to aid me, as thou aid'st me now.

[*Exit* AJAX.]

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

*Min.* Thou see'st, Ulysses, Heaven's resistless might.

Who was more prudent than bold Ajax once,  
And who more daring in the hour of need?

*Ulys.* I know of none ; but now he moves my  
pity,

Thus plunged in misery, though my deadliest foe, .  
Who now is struggling with such weighty ills,  
His fate regarding as mine own may fall.  
I see that we who live are nothing more  
Than a vain image and a fleeting shade.

*Min.* This then observing, dare not thou to  
breathe

High words of swollen pride against the Gods ;  
Nor boast presumptuous, if in martial deeds  
Or treasured wealth thou pass thy fellow man.  
A day o'erthrows, a day to light restores  
All mortal things—and still the heavenly Powers  
Regard the lowly, while they loathe the proud.

[*Exeunt* MINERVA and ULYSSES.]

<sup>3</sup> Pulvis et umbra sumus.—Hor.

We are such stuff

As dreams are made of.

Shakspeare.

Ονειράτων

Ἀλίγκιοι μορφᾶισι.

Prom. Vincit. 457.



*Chorus.*

O son of Telamon, whose sway  
The shores of Salamis obey,  
Wet with encircling ocean's spray ;  
I triumph in thy fame :—  
But when th' indignant stroke of Jove  
Descends, or slanderous Greeks reprove,  
Then, timid as the fluttering dove,  
I sink with fear and shame.  
As from the night that now hath fled,  
Loud rumours wake our liveliest dread ;  
'Tis said, that rushing to the plain,  
By thee the captured herds were slain,  
To Grecian valour due ;  
All that of martial spoils remain  
Thy sword infuriate slew.  
Such slanders doth Ulysses bear,  
Such whispers breathe in every ear,  
And much prevails ;—mid the low train  
His calumnies glad credence gain ;—  
As he who speaks, so they who hear  
Insulting mock thy pain.  
He rarely errs who flings on high,  
At gallant souls, his contumely ;

Whilst I, of lowlier lot, evade  
 The penalty by greatness paid ;  
 For envy steals with silent aim  
 On nobler worth and loftier fame.  
 And though the mean, apart from power  
 But ill support the tottering tower ;  
 As they, to greatness linked, are strong,  
 So greatness needs the meaner throng.  
 Yet thus to teach th' insensate train  
 E'en wisdom's self might speak in vain.  
 From such the clamorous tumults flow,  
 And powerless we to curb the foe,  
 Without our Chieftain's aid ;  
 Like babbling birds, while yet by thee  
 Unseen, they vent their calumny ;  
 But, like the vulture in his might,  
 Shouldst thou, O King ! appear in sight,  
 Soon would they urge their conscious flight,  
 Confounded and dismayed.

## STROPHE.

Did Dian, <sup>4</sup>Queen of Tauris, Child of Jove,

---

<sup>4</sup> Ταυροπέλα. According to Brunck, *vecta tauris* ; Lobeck, however, inclines to the sense of *huntress of bulls*. The

(O widely spreading fame,  
 The parent of my shame !)  
 Against the public herds thy frenzy move,  
 Incensed by vows of conquest yet unpaid ;  
 Perchance defrauded of the promised spoil,  
 Or victims vowed for hunter's prosperous toil ?  
 Or did the brazen-mailed Mars invade  
 Thy breast with nightly wiles, avenging here  
 The wrong thine arms have wrought to his con-  
 federate spear ?

## ANTISTROPHE.

' Not in the vigour of thy manly mind  
 This erring deed was done,  
 O child of Telamon !

Diana Taurica was worshipped at Brauron, a village of Attica ; but if these rites were instituted subsequently to the carrying off Iphigenia from Tauris by Orestes, the poet, if our translation be correct, has been guilty of a gross anachronism. We must, however, concede somewhat to that poetical license, which puts a saying of Solon into the mouth of Deianira.

Euripides, *Iph. in Tauris*, 1457, has the same epithet :

Τολοιπὸν ὑμνήσουσι Ταυροπόλον Διάν.

And celebrate in hymns the Tauric Maid.

West.

Ἡ Φρενὸς γ' ἐπ' ἀρεστέρῃ. Si mens non læva fuisset.—Virg.

Thy fatal frenzy was by Heaven assigned.  
Phœbus, and Jove avert the dire disgrace !  
But if the mighty Kings, to blast thy fame,  
Suborned the vulgar to these words of shame,  
Or he of 'Sisyphus' accursed race,  
No more, O Monarch, in thy tent delay,  
With eyes enchained to earth, to foul reports a prey.

## EPODE.

Rise from thy seat, O King, where all too long  
In lingering anguish thou hast borne the wrong,  
Feeding the wrathful curse of Heaven ;—  
Thy fearless foes through every sheltered vale,  
With vaunting insult speed the slanderous tale ;  
And all with scoffing tongues on thee  
Pour foul reproach and injury,  
While my sad heart with settled grief is riven.

*Enter* TECMESSA.

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<sup>6</sup> Anticlea, the mother of Ulysses, is said to have been violated by Sisyphus, prior to her union with Laertes. Hence Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 529. " Hortator scelerum Æolides." Sisyphus was the son of Æolus.

## TECMESSA, CHORUS.

*Tec.* Ye, from the <sup>7</sup> earth-born Erectheidæ sprung,  
 Great Ajax' naval band,  
 Well may we mourn, who from afar regard  
 The house of Telamon !  
 The brave, the bold, the matchless Ajax lies,  
 Sunk by the turbid storm  
 Of raging frenzy low.

*Ch.* How hath this night to heaviest sorrow  
 changed  
 The fortunes of the day !  
 Daughter of Phrygian <sup>8</sup>Teuthras, since with thee,

---

<sup>7</sup> Erectheus, son of Pandion, and sixth King of Athens. But, according to others, he is reported to have been the son of Vulcan and the Earth. It is well known, that the Athenians piqued themselves on the antiquity of their descent; hence Creon addresses them, in the *Œdip.* Col. 728.

*"Ἄνδρες χθονὸς τῆσδ' ἰγγυεῖς οἰκήτορες.*

This is, in the present instance, merely a political stroke to flatter the Athenians.

<sup>8</sup> Teleutas in the text, but, according to some, Teuthras.

Though captured by his spear, great Ajax shares  
The bridal couch of love ;—  
Speak, for thou know'st, and canst impart the  
whole.

*Tec.* How shall I breathe what words can never  
tell ?

Of evils thou wilt hear more keen than death.  
Our noble Ajax, by one frantic deed  
This night is branded with eternal shame.  
Within yon tent mayst thou behold,  
Bathed in their blood, the victims of his wrath,  
The slaughter of his hand !

*Ch.* What tidings of the fiery warrior these,  
Nor to be borne nor shunned ;—  
Already whispered 'mid the mighty chiefs,  
And which, ere long, will gathering rumours swell !  
Alas ! I presage ill ! The hero soon  
Will fall indignant by the same rash hand  
Which, armed by madness, slew with vengeful sword  
The herdsmen and their charge.

*Tec.* Thence, thence, alas ! he came, and drove  
The herd, like captives, to his tent ;  
Some, stretched on earth, he slew within,  
Plunged deep the sword in some, and clave in twain.  
Two rams with snow-white feet he chose ;—the head

And tongue of one he lopped and cast away ;—  
The other, to a column bound erect,  
Seizing his chariot's weighty rein, he lashed  
As with a double scourge, mocking it still  
With keen reproach, which none of mortal race,  
But some ill Power hath taught.

*Ch.* Time is it now for each with veiled head  
And silent step to fly ;  
Or mount the bench, and ply the labouring oar,  
To urge along the ocean-ranging bark.  
Such threats on us the brother-chiefs denounce ;  
We too, I fear, crushed by o'erwhelming stones,  
Shall share, ere long, the fortunes of our Lord,  
Whom fate, resistless fate, impels.

*Tec.* Impels no more. <sup>9</sup> Swift as the southern blast  
That rose without red lightning, he rushed forth ;—  
As soon is calm. Now, cooler sense restored,  
He feels a fresh affliction ; since to gaze  
On evils all our own, which none beside  
Partakes, is keener woe.

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<sup>9</sup> The Scholiast informs us, that those who are acquainted with the nature of the winds have observed, that when the south rises, not attended with lightning, its violence soon ceases.—Potter. See Theophrastus, *De Signis Ventorum*.

*Ch.* If he be calm, then all may yet be well ;  
Our cares are less for ills already vanished.

*Tec.* Which, if the choice were thine, wouldst  
thou prefer ?

Wouldst thou, thyself at ease, afflict thy friends,  
Or share their common grief in common ills ?

*Ch.* The two-fold evil, Lady, is the greater.

*Tec.* Thus we, no more diseased, are suffering  
now.

*Ch.* What mean thy words ambiguous, for I  
know not

The tenour of thy speech ?

*Tec.* This man, while yet  
The frenzied plague possessed him, in his ills  
Exulted ; we, more sane, were plunged in woe.  
Now, since the respite to his madness came,  
His bosom rankles with a keener pang,  
Nor are our sorrows lighter than before.  
Say, are not these two evils sprung from one ?

*Ch.* Thy words are just. I tremble, lest this  
woe

Be Heaven's own plague. Alas ! how should it not ?  
If, the disease now quelled, he joys no more  
Than when it still was raging ?



*Tec.* Know thou then,  
Such is his state.

*Ch.* And whence arose these ills ?  
Inform us, Lady ; for in all his woes  
We keenly sympathize.

*Tec.* Thou shalt hear all, as partner of the deed.  
In the deep midnight, when the "evening lamps  
Glimmered no more, he seized his two-edged sword,  
And, as I deemed, rushed forth without a cause.  
I then remonstrate thus : " What wouldst thou do,  
My Ajax ? why thus issue from thy tent  
Uncalled—unsummoned or by herald's voice  
Or by the signal trumpet ? Now, at least,

<sup>10</sup> "Εσπεροι λαμπτήρες. This has been understood to mean the stars ; but expressions occurring in various authors, *πρὸς λύχων ἀφὰς*, Dionys. Hal. xi. *μέχρι λυχίων ἀφῶν*, Athen. 12, " ad extremas lucernas," Propert. Eleg. 111, (to which we may add, *pereundum est ante lucernas*, Juvenal, x. 339,) are in favour of the rendering in the text. "Ακρας νυκτός, the dead of night. Pindar, Isthm. iv. 58 :

Ἴσται μὲν Αἴαντος ἀλκὰν  
Φοίνιον, τὰν ὀψία  
Ἐν νυκτὶ ταμὼν περὶ ᾧ  
Φασγάνῳ, κ. τ. λ.

Lobeck.

The host is hushed in sleep." He but replied,  
 In words abrupt, that for an adage pass,  
 "Silence, O woman, is a woman's grace."  
 Reproved, I ceased ; my Lord went forth alone.  
 Meantime, nought knew I of the deeds he wrought.  
 At length, the chief returned, driving in bonds  
 The bulls, the shepherd-dogs, and horned prey.  
<sup>2</sup> From some, the heads he severed ; some, on earth  
 Laid prostrate, mangled with unsparing sword ;  
 Some, bound in fetters, with the sounding scourge,  
 Falling upon the flocks, as men, he lashed.  
 Last, rushing through the portal, converse there  
 He held, as with some spectre, speaking much  
 Now of th' Atridæ, now Laertes' son,  
 Commingling insult keen ;—how, by this deed,

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<sup>1</sup> Γυναικὶ γὰρ σιγὴ τε καὶ τὸ σωφρονεῖν  
 Κέλλιστον.

Euripides.

So Hector, Il. vi. 490. Indeed, ancient as well as modern authors seem pretty unanimously agreed on this very important subject.

<sup>2</sup> In this, as in several passages of a similar description, some deviation from the literal signification of the original has been found indispensable. "Some, turning them on their backs, he stabbed and hewed through their spine."

Their guilty outrage he had well repaid.  
But when he bent his course once more within,  
Where, in long time, cool reason scarce returned,  
Soon as he marked the tent with carnage strewed,  
He smote his head in anguish—dashed to earth  
His form—lay prostrate mid the prostrate herds,  
Tearing with ruthless hand his flowing hair.  
Long time in moody silence thus he sate,  
Then turned on me with threats of vehement wrath,  
Unless I truly told the whole event,  
And all the tenour of this fatal act.  
I then, my friends, affrighted, of the deed  
Revealed in trembling accents all I knew.  
Straight he burst forth in loud and long laments,  
Such from his lips I never heard before ;  
For he till then maintained, that wailings wild  
Were the sure symptoms of a coward-heart ;  
Nor gave his sorrow utterance, but compressed  
His groanings inward, like the murmuring bull.  
Thus in his tent reclined in evil case,  
Nor food nor drink hath cheered him ; but he sits  
Amidst encircling slaughter mute and stern.  
Some fearful deed he plainly now designs,  
As wandering words and bursting groans declare.  
Ye then, my friends, for in this hope I came,

Come, if ye can, and aid your gallant chief;  
Oft are such hearts by friendly words subdued.

*Ch.* Sad is thy tale, Tecmessa, that a soul  
So noble should be plunged in ills like these.

*Aj.* Ah me! Ah me! [*Within.*

*Tec.* Soon will his frenzy heighten. Heard ye not  
How deep a groan from wretched Ajax broke?

*Aj.* Woe! woe is me! [*Within.*

*Ch.* He seems to grapple with his anguish now,  
Or writhes in keen remembrance of the past.

*Aj.* Alas! my son! my son! [*Within.*

*Tec.* Ah me! Eurysaces, for thee he calls!  
What means he now? Where art thou? Wretched  
me!

*Aj.* I call for Teucer—where is Teucer? Still  
Will he pursue the prey, while I am lost? [*Within.*

*Ch.* Sense hath, it seems, returned. Unclose  
the door;  
Regard for me may haply soothe him yet.

*Tec.* Lo! I unclose it; thou mayst now be-  
hold  
His frenzied acts and utter wretchedness.

[*Scene opens and discovers AJAX.*

AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

*Aj.* O comrades, most beloved, my only friends,  
Who only honour's law regard;  
Ye see <sup>3</sup> what bloody waves  
From this tempestuous sea  
Your hapless Lord enclose.

*Ch.* Alas! too true, it seems, hath been thy tale.  
These fatal deeds proclaim how wild his frenzy.

ANTISTROPHE I.

*Aj.* My brave associates, skilled in naval art,  
To urge the light bark o'er the main;—  
You, you alone, of all  
Have I yet faithful found;  
Then slay me,—slay me now.

<sup>3</sup> Φοινίας ὑπὸ ζάλης. This kind of metaphor is of frequent occurrence among the Greek tragedians. Æsch. Prom. 771. 1051. Eurip. Med. 603. Sophocles, Antig. 163. Œdip. Tyr. 23. So Shakspeare:

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And, by opposing, end them.

Hamlet, act iii. sc. 1.

*Ch.* Speak words of happier import, nor in woe  
Seek for o'erwhelming ills a deadlier cure.

## STROPHE II.

*Aj.* See'st thou the bold, the lion-hearted chief,  
Who never yet shrunk back from battle's van,  
Vent his wild rage on herds secure of ill?—  
Alas! what scorn, what mockery shall be mine!

*Tec.* My Lord! my Ajax! speak not thus, I  
pray thee.

*Aj.* Wilt thou not hence! wilt thou not hence  
retire?

O wretch! wretch! wretch!

*Ch.* Now by the Gods, my Lord,  
Yield to her prayer, and calm thy frenzied soul.

## STROPHE III.

*Aj.* Unhappy! who, from this right hand,  
Let slip the hated foes;  
And rushing on the sable herds  
And unoffending flocks,  
Drew forth inglorious blood.

*Ch.* Why sorrow thus for deeds already done?  
It cannot be that thou recall the past.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

*Aj.* O all-exploring and of every ill  
The wily instrument, Laertes' son ;  
Thou scorn and scandal of our warlike host ;  
How wilt thou mock and revel in my woes !

*Ch.* As Heaven ordains, so man must smile or  
weep.

*Aj.* O could I meet him, though thus sunk in ills.  
Unhappy me !

*Ch.* Nay, do not speak thus proudly !  
Dost thou not mark the miseries of thy doom ?

## ANTISTROPHE III.

*Aj.* O Jove!<sup>4</sup> great father of my sires !  
Could I but doom to death,  
That specious, scheming foe, and crush  
The sceptre-sharing Kings,  
How gladly would I die !

*Tec.* When thou dost pray for death, ask too  
for me

<sup>4</sup> Προγόνων προπάτωρ. Ajax was the son of Telamon, the son of Æacus, the son of Jove. Thus Ovid, *Metam.* xiii.

“ Ab Jove tertius Ajax.”

The same: how could I live when thou hadst  
perished?

## STROPHE IV.

*Aj.* O darkness, now my light! O shades of hell,  
My brightest radiance now,  
Receive, receive your sad inhabitant;  
Receive me, from this hour  
Unworthy or to look  
On the blest Gods, or on mankind,  
To aid me in my woes.  
The daughter of high Jove,  
The Goddess of unconquerable might,  
Impels me to the tomb.  
Ah! whither can I fly,  
Or henceforth where abide?  
Comrades, my former fame is lost  
By these last fatal deeds;  
My name is sullied by ignoble spoils:  
And soon the host, in vengeance doubly armed,  
Shall seek my life.

*Tec.* Alas! that one so noble should indulge  
In words, which had but waked his scorn before.

## ANTISTROPHE IV.

*Aj.* Ye ocean-seeking streams, and sea-girt caves;



Thou grove that crowns the shore ;  
 Long, long a captive have ye held me here  
 Round Troy's beleaguered towers ;  
 But—breathing life's free air,  
 Shall hold me here no more.—Know this,  
 Whoe'er can rightly judge !  
 O Thou, whose limpid streams  
 Adjacent flow, Scamander ! to the host  
 Of Greece propitious still ;  
 Know, never, never more  
 Shalt thou behold the man  
 (I speak a high and haughty word)  
 Whose peer none ever marked  
 On Trojan plains, 'mid all the host who sailed  
 From Grecian realms ; but now dishonoured thus,  
 Prostrate he lies.

*Ch.* Nor can I check, nor yet endure thy words,  
 So great the evils which enclose thee now.

*Aj.* <sup>3</sup>Ah me ! who ever could have deemed my name

<sup>3</sup> "Αἰ, αἶ—νῦν γὰρ πάρις καὶ δὲς αἰάξειν ἱμὸι—Καὶ τρεῖς. The pun in this passage is altogether puerile, and unworthy of Sophocles. It will, however, bear a comparison with Shakespeare's —

" This is Rome,  
 And room enough."—Julius Cæsar.

Should thus be proved accordant with my woes?  
Well may my bosom heave repeated groans,  
Such and so fatal are the ills I bear;—  
I,—whose bold sire from this Idæan strand  
Bore the first trophies mid the victor-host,  
And with unrivalled glory sought his home;—  
While I, his son, to the same Trojan plain  
Proceeding, and with no inferior might,  
Like deeds of conquest by my sword achieved,  
By Greece dishonoured, thus ignobly die.  
Yet this at least my firm conviction deems;  
If still the brave Achilles lived t' award  
His arms the guerdon of superior worth,  
No other hand had borne the prize from mine.  
And now th' Atridæ grant them to a wretch  
Skilled but in wiles, and on my nobler deeds  
Pour foul contempt. Had not these eyes, this mind  
Beguiled by false illusions, failed my purpose,  
With like decrees they ne'er had wronged another.  
But now the virgin-daughter of high Jove,  
In aspect stern, unconquered, when this hand  
Was stretched to strike in vengeance, foiled my aim,  
And o'er my soul such maddening frenzy cast,  
That on these harmless herds my fury fell;  
While the base foes, against my will escaped

Laugh in triumphant scorn. But when the Gods  
Oppose him, e'en a coward may evade  
The brave man's vengeance.—What then must I do?  
I, who am clearly hateful to the Gods,  
Nor less abhorred by Greece—while Troy's proud  
towers,

And these her plains to me are adverse all?

This naval post forsaking, shall I leave  
The sons of Atreus, and, with homeward course,  
Plough the Ægean wave? Then with what eye  
Could I appear in presence of my sire,  
Great Telamon?—How could he brook to see  
His son return, by martial spoils ungraced,  
Such crown of glory as himself achieved?  
This is not to be borne. Shall I then rush  
Against the Trojans' rampart, and alone,  
With them alone contending, first perform  
Some glorious deed, and then triumphant fall?  
Nay, this at least th' Atridæ would delight,  
And thence it shall not be. I must explore  
Some path, which to my aged sire may prove  
I share the spirit of his princely line.

It shames a man to seek protracted life

Who sees no limit to encircling woes.

What joy remains, when day succeeds to day,

For a brief space at best deferring death?  
 I count the man most worthless, who would feed  
 His wavering soul with vain delusive hope :  
 To live with glory, or with glory die  
 Befits the noble. Thou hast heard my thoughts.

*Cho.* None will affirm, my Lord, that thoughts  
 like these

Are false and foreign to a soul like thine.  
 Yet cease from wrath, and to thine anxious friends  
 Display a softened spirit, and dismiss  
 These galling cares.

*Tec.* O ! Ajax ! my dear Lord,  
 No heavier woe hath man than slavery !  
 I was descended from a free-born sire,  
 In wealth the proudest of the Phrygian realm ;  
 And now I am a slave. So Heaven ordained,  
 And such the prowess of thy conquering hand.  
 For this, since raised to share thy nuptial couch,  
 I count thy welfare mine, and I conjure thee,  
 'By Jove, the guardian of domestic ties,

\* Ἐφεστίῳ Διὶ.—Ephesian Jupiter presided over the hearth shared in common by all who dwelt in the same house.—Potter. Compare the speech of Andromache to Hector. Il. vi. 459.

And by that couch, which binds the sacred vow ;  
Ah ! leave me not a by-word and a taunt  
To thine insulting foes—an easy prey  
To some imperious lord. If thou wilt die  
And, dying, leave me friendless—on that day,  
Be well assured, by brutal force constrained,  
I, with thy son, by Greece shall be consigned  
To abject servitude. Thus then, perchance,  
Shall some rude tyrant breathe the piercing taunt,—  
“ Behold the wife of Ajax, who excelled  
“ The Grecian chiefs in valour, how her lot,  
“ So envied once, is changed to bitter bondage!”  
Thus will they speak, while fate constrains me still ;  
And words like these to thee, and to thy race,  
Are fraught with foul dishonour. O revere  
Thy father, thus abandoned in his age ;  
Revere thy mother, who with many years  
Oppressed, oft, oft implores the Gods once more  
To greet her living Ajax. O my Lord !  
Have pity on thy son, who, of thy care  
In tender youth bereft, will pine oppressed  
By faithless guardians. Such to him and me  
Thou leav’st in death a legacy of woe.  
Where should I look for refuge, save to thee ?  
Thy conquering arms have laid my country waste,

And, for my parents,<sup>5</sup> by a different doom  
 Both, both are tenants of the silent grave.  
 What country could requite me, chief, for thee?  
 What wealth? Thou art my safety, thou alone.  
 O then remember me—it ill befits  
 A manly bosom to forget whence sprung  
 What once it deemed delightful. Kindness still  
 Gives birth to kindness. He, from whose cold breast  
 Grateful remembrance fades, can never boast  
 The grace and glory of a generous soul.

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<sup>5</sup> Σὺ γάρ μοι πατρίδ' ἤγνωσας δορί,  
 Καὶ μητίρ' ἄλλη μῶιρα τὸν φύσαντά τι  
 Καθίλει "Αἶδου θανάσιμος οἰκήτορας.

This is the passage referred to in the prefatory remarks, which, if Potter's translation be correct, would give such a decisive overthrow to our prepossessions in favour of the unfortunate Tecmessa; and, consequently, so materially diminish the interest of the drama. Following Brunck, who places the stop after *μητίρ'*, he has—

Beneath thy conquering spear  
 My ruined country and my mother sunk.

We have preferred the arrangement of Lobeck and Erfurdt, who punctuate the passage as above; and by that expedient altogether evade the difficulty of supposing Ajax to be the murderer of the mother of Tecmessa. Matthiæ, vol. ii. 418, quoting the passage, reads τὸν φύσαντά μιν—a reading liable to great objection.

*Ch.* O were thine heart with pity moved, as mine,  
Her words, my Lord, would win a prompt assent.

*Aj.* She will, indeed, command my warmest praise,  
If to my bidding she will dare to yield  
A due obedience.

*Tec.* My dear Lord, in all  
Will I obey thee.

*Aj.* Bring me then my son  
That I may gaze upon him.

*Tec.* In my fears  
I hence removed him.

*Aj.* By our recent ills  
Alarmed ? or wherefore ?

*Tec.* Lest the hapless child,  
Encountering thee, should fall beneath thy hand.

*Aj.* That were, indeed, congenial with my fate.

*Tec.* And to prevent it, I have thus secured him.

*Aj.* I praise thy wise precaution in the deed.

*Tec.* Say, in what else can I obey thy word ?

*Aj.* Let me behold him, and address my son.

*Tec.* Thy trusty train protect him near the spot.

*Aj.* Why is his presence then so long delayed ?

*Tec.* My son, thy father calls thee. Of our train,  
Thou, who dost bear the child, haste, bring him in.

*Aj.* Say, comes he at thy call, or hears thee not ?

*Tec.* E'en now th' attendant with his charge is nigh.

*Aj.* Bring, bring him hither, for he will not shrink  
At the deep hue of this ensanguined carnage,  
If he, in truth, can rightly call me father.

Soon should he learn the firm unbending mood  
Of my proud soul, and emulate his sire.

° Mayst thou, my son, be happier than thy father ;  
Like him in all beside ; so with the base

Never shalt thou be numbered. Happy now  
I may pronounce thee, since these present ills  
Are all unfelt by thee. Alas ! how oft,

When thought is absent, life is most serene,

\* \* \* \* \*

Until thou learn to smile, and to be sad !

When thou attain this age, then must thou prove  
To all thy father's foes, from what bold stock  
Thou cam'st—thyself as brave. Meanwhile be nursed  
By sportive breathings, fostering thy young life,  
Thy tender mother's joy. Of all the Greeks  
None, well I know, with hate and foul reproach  
Will ever spurn thee, though bereft of me.

° Disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem ;  
Fortunam ex aliis.—Virgil, *Æn.* xii. 434.



So bold a guardian o'er thee shall I leave  
 In Teucer, who will watch thy nurture well,  
 Though now, from sight afar, he hunts the foe.  
 Ye, too, dear warriors, skilled to stem the wave,  
 To you this common office I bequeath,  
 Give him my last commands ; that he conduct  
 My son to Salamis, and show him there  
 To Telamon, and Eriboea old,  
 That he may be the solace of their age,  
 Till they shall reach the gloomy halls of Death.  
 Let not the judges of the strife, nor he,  
 My deadliest foe, propose mine arms to Greece,  
 The victor's prize ; Eurysaces, my son,  
 Bear thou the shield, from which thou draw'st thy  
                     name,  
 Of seven tough hides compact—by hostile spear  
 Unperforate, and close knit with many thongs.  
 Take this, my son ; be my remaining arms  
 Laid with me in the grave. And now with speed  
 Bear quickly hence thy child ; close fast the house,  
 Nor wail within the tent. <sup>7</sup> Tears promptly spring  
 To female eyes. Shut now thy doors with speed.

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<sup>7</sup> Γυνὴ δὲ θῆλυ, καὶ πρὶ δακρύοις ἔφυσεν.—Medea, 924.

No skilful leech by potent charms can heal  
The wound whose only med'cine is the sword.

*Ch.* I quake to hear this prompt and ardent  
charge—

This language of despair—I like it not.

*Tec.* My Lord, my Ajax, what is thy design?

*Aj.* Nay, think not—ask not—prudence most be-  
comes thee.

*Tec.* Alas! what terrors seize me. By thy child,  
Yea, by the Gods, I do conjure thee, pause;  
Ah, doom us not to ruin!

*Aj.* Thou dost wake  
My heaviest wrath. <sup>3</sup>What! know'st thou not that I  
Owe nought of prayer or reverence to the Gods?

*Tec.* Speak better omens.

<sup>3</sup> Nothing impious is here intended: the words of Ajax have the same signification as those of Æneas over the dead body of Pallas:

Nos juvenem exanimum, et nil jam cœlestibus ullis  
Debentem, vano mœstī comitamur honore.

Potter.

We cannot concur in this opinion of Potter, into which he appears to have been led by extreme partiality for his hero. Impiety (see line 127) was a predominant feature in the character of Ajax.

*Aj.* Prate to those who hear thee.

*Tec.* Wilt thou not heed me?

*Aj.* Thou hast said too much !

*Tec.* I fear, my Lord—

*Aj.* Will ye not force her in?

*Tec.* Be softened, by the Gods !

*Aj.* Thou art bereft

Of prudence, if thou form the vain design  
To shake the settled temper of my soul.

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

Famed Salamis,—thy happy shores arise,  
Sublime 'mid ocean, where the wild waves war;  
Thy towering cliffs the distant sail descries ;  
While I, unhappy ! lingering yet afar  
On Ida's pastured plain  
Through long, long years remain,  
Unhonoured, and by withering age opprest;  
Torn with desponding fear,  
Lest darker fate severe  
Dismiss my shuddering soul to Death's drear shades  
unblest.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Ah me! the gallant Ajax, sunk in woes  
 No art can heal, augments my anxious care;  
 From Heaven's dread wrath his fatal frenzy rose;  
 Whom to the combat, ever foremost there,  
 My country, thou hast sent;  
 Whose soul, by madness rent,  
 Now in his pitying friends wakes deep dismay.  
 His deeds of martial might,  
 Achieved in prosperous fight,  
 By Atreus' senseless sons unvalued pass away.

## STROPHE II.

O when, by wasting years  
 Worn down, and hoary age,  
 An absent mother hears  
 This act of frenzied rage;  
 She will not pour the dirge of woe,  
 'Like Philomela, faint and low:

' The nightingale is a favourite simile among the Latin as well as the Greek poets.

Qualis populea mœrens Philomela sub umbra  
 Amissos queritur foetus, &c.

Virg. Georg. iv. 511.

So Hom. Od. xix. 518.

No ; she will mourn her hapless child,  
With piercing shrieks of vain despair ;  
And smite her breast in anguish wild,  
And rend her scattered locks of silver hair:

## ANTISTROPHE II.

O happier, did he rest  
In death, than thus to pine  
With cureless griefs oppressed !  
The Chief of lofty line  
Noblest of Greece, whose wiser mood  
Is now by maddening rage subdued.  
Ah wretched sire ! what keen regret  
Awaits thee for thy hapless son !  
Plunged deep in heaviest woes, as yet  
To all thy princely race, save him, unknown !  
Aj. Time, in his lengthened and unmeasured  
course,  
Reveals things secret, and in darkness veils  
The most conspicuous ; nought transcends the range  
Of hope ; stern oaths, and fixedness of soul  
Are each in turn subdued. I, who but now  
Inflexible, like tempered steel, appeared,  
Relent, persuaded by this woman's words.  
I pity her, left widowed 'mid my foes ;

My son, a helpless orphan. Moved by this,  
To the pure baths and pastured shores I go,  
That, cleansed from all pollutions, I may shun  
The fearful vengeance of the Virgin-Power.  
Some yet untrodden spot will I explore  
To hide this sword,—this weapon most abhorred,  
Deep in the earth, where none may e'er behold,  
But Night and Hell preserve it evermore.  
'Twas Hector's gift, my most detested foe;  
And since the hour he gave it, nought from Greece  
Have I achieved of honour. Sage and true  
Is the old adage, 'that a foeman's gift  
Is not a gift, nor fraught with solid good.  
Henceforth we'll pay meet reverence to the Gods,  
And learn submission to the sons of Atreus.  
They are Kings, and should be honoured. Where-  
fore not?

The martial and most valiant must concede  
To loftier station; thus the wintry snows  
Yield to the fruitful summer. Night's dark orb  
Retires from Heaven, that with his snow-white steeds  
Glad Day may kindle o'er the reddening skies.  
When with wild winds vexed Ocean hoarsely raves,

---

<sup>1</sup> Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.—Virg. *Æn.* 11. 49.

A gentler gale may still the storm to peace ;  
And Sleep, the all-subduing, breaks the chain  
Wherewith he bound, nor holds us captive ever.  
Why then should we refuse to learn submission,  
Since—for at length I know—<sup>2</sup>so would I hate  
A foe, as one whom friendship's tie restored,  
May yet unite once more ; so would I aim  
To aid a friend, in action and in word,  
As one yet prone to change ? Friendship, I know,  
To man a faithless haven oft hath proved.  
But all shall yet be well. Retire within,  
And pray the Gods, Tecmessa, to bestow  
A prosperous issue to my soul's desire.  
Ye too, dear comrades, to your chief concede  
An equal honour ; and when Teucer comes,  
Tell him our will, and bid him, too, concur.  
Now where Fate calls me thither must I go.  
Ye but observe the bidding of your Lord ;  
And soon, perchance, though now in misery sunk,  
My glad release from sorrow shall ye hear.

[*Exit* AJAX.]

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<sup>2</sup> Similar is the sentiment referred to by Cicero, de Amic. xvi. Compare, also, Eurip. Hippol. 253, et seqq.

*Chorus.*

## STROPHE.

Now with love my heart is glowing ;  
 Now with livelier joys o'erflowing :  
 Iö, Iö, Sylvan God,  
 Wanderer of the ocean-flood,  
 Come, O Pan, from heights of snow,  
 On ' Cyllene's craggy brow ;  
 Come, Monarch of the choir divine,  
 For all the graceful art is thine :  
 Come, thine own sportive dance to share ;—  
 Such as on Nysa's heights of green,  
 And in the Gnossian vales is seen ;—  
 The dance is all my care.  
 Hastening o'er th' <sup>4</sup> Icarian main,

---

<sup>3</sup> Cyllene, a mountain of Arcadia, jointly patronized by Mercury, whose birth-place it was, and Pan. (Pan Deus Arcadiæ venit. Virg. Ecl. 10.) Nysa, a summit of Parnassus, the same with that mentioned in the Antigone. Gnossus, a city in Crete.

Ἐν δὲ χορὸν πόικιλλε περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις  
 Τῷ Ἰκίλον, δῖον ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσσῷ εὐρέειη  
 Δαίδαλος ἥσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδῃ.

Il. 18. 590.

<sup>4</sup> The Icarian sea, south of Icaros, on the coast of Ionia.



Royal Phœbus, Delian Power;  
Thou too, in the joyous hour  
Thy favouring presence deign !

## ANTISTROPHE.

Mars hath changed the clouds of sadness,  
To the cheerful beam of gladness :  
Iö, Iö, now again,  
Now, O Jove, her welcome reign  
Morn resumes, and pours her light  
O'er the gallies, swift in flight ;  
Since of his wrath forgetful now  
Ajax again the suppliant vow  
To Heaven's offended Powers hath paid,  
Again fulfilled each holy rite.—  
Before stern Time's resistless might  
All mortal strength must fade :  
Nor would I of aught despair—  
Since from wrath and mortal feud  
Ajax to the Royal Pair  
Resumes a milder mood.

*Enter* MESSENGER.

## MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Mess.* My friends, these tidings I would first  
relate,

Teucer is present from the Mysian heights ;  
Whom, while advancing midway through the host,  
With stern reproach the Argive bands pursued.  
When from afar they saw him, all withstood  
His onward path, and, flocking round, broke forth  
On every side in keen upbraiding taunts ;  
From insult none refrained. “ The brother this,”  
They cry, “ of that wild madman, to the host  
A false convicted traitor, who shall die,  
Crushed, as he merits, by o’erwhelming stones.”  
Nay, to such height arose the gathering fray,  
That many hands were drawing from the sheath  
Their glittering swords. At length the strife was  
hushed,

By wise persuasions of experienced age.  
But where is Ajax, that to his own ear  
These tidings I may bear—for to our Lord  
Duty enjoins us to disclose the whole?

*Ch.* He is no more within; but late went forth  
In new-born calmness, and with new design.

*Mess.* Alas ! Alas !

Then he, who sent me hither, gave too late  
His charge, or I have loitered on my way.

*Ch.* What, then, is wanting of our present need ?

*Mess.* Teucer gave charge, that, till himself arrived,  
The Chief an instant should not quit the tent.

*Ch.* He went, with wisest purpose, to avert,  
By pious prayer, the anger of the Gods.

*Mess.* Such words are empty babbling, if we hold  
<sup>s</sup>The prescient Calchas an unerring prophet.

*Ch.* What ? Hath he aught foretold concerning  
this ?

*Mess.* Thus much I know, for I was present  
there.

Out of the court and council of the Kings  
Calchas apart from Atreus' sons retired,  
And grasping Teucer's hand, with friendly zeal,  
Charged and conjured him, by whatever means  
He could devise, throughout this day to keep  
Ajax within his tent, nor let him range  
Beyond its precincts, if he still desired  
To see him living. On this day alone,

---

<sup>s</sup> Præterea, si qua est Heleno prudentia, vati  
Si qua fides.—Virgil.

He said, against him burned Athena's wrath.  
 For oft, the Seer declared, unwieldy <sup>6</sup> might,  
 If void of prudence, by offended Heaven  
 Is crushed in ruin, when beyond his birth  
 With aim too daring senseless man aspires.  
 When first the Chieftain left his native isle,  
 He heeded not his father's prudent charge,  
 Who thus addressed him: "Seek, my son, in fight,  
 To conquer, but still conquer through the Gods:"  
 This was his haughty and unwise reply:  
 "Father, with heavenly aid a coward's hand  
 May grasp the prize of conquest; I confide  
 To win such trophies e'en without the Gods."  
 So lofty was his boast. Thus too once more,  
 When mighty Pallas spurred him on to turn  
 His reeking hand against th' opposing foe,  
 He answered stern in proud and impious strain:  
 "O Queen! to other Argives lend thine aid;  
 No hostile might shall break where Ajax stands."

<sup>6</sup> This admirable sentiment is well expressed by Horace:

*Vis consilii expers mole ruit sua:*

*Vim temperatam Di quoque provehunt*

*In majus: idem odere vires*

*Omne nefas animo moventes.*—Hor. Lib. iii. 4.

By words like these he roused to ruthless ire  
Th' offended Goddess, for his spirit burned  
With pride unmeet for mortals. But this day  
If he survive, then, with celestial aid,  
We yet may save him. Thus the Prophet spake ;  
And Teucer bade me from the council bear  
These weighty mandates for thy prompt observance.  
If here our purpose fail, and Calchas prove  
A faithful prophet, Ajax is no more !

*Ch.* Wretched Tecmessa, born to bitterest woe,  
Come forth, and listen to these news of ill—  
Torn from the root are now thy transient joys.

*Tec.* Who calls a hapless wretch, scarce resting yet  
From unexhausted ills, to quit her seat ?

*Ch.* Hear from this man, what tidings he reports  
Of Ajax ; terror seized me as I heard.

*Tec.* Ah me ! what say'st thou ?—are we then  
undone ?

*Mess.* Thy fate I know not ; but for Ajax' doom,  
If he have left his tent, no hope I feel.

*Tec.* He hath indeed ; and therefore at thy words,  
Fear steals upon my soul !

*Mess.* 'Tis Teucer's charge,  
He should be closely watched, nor left alone  
To wander forth.

*Tec.* And where is Teucer, say ;  
And wherefore charged he thus ?

*Mess.* E'en now he comes.  
But oh ! I tremble, lest this sad event  
Be but the prelude to the fall of Ajax.

*Tec.* Unhappy me ! And who informed thee thus ?

*Mess.* The Prophet-son of Thestor, that this day<sup>7</sup>  
Would bring or certain death, or life secure.

*Tec.* Ah me ! lend, lend, O friends, your prompt-  
est aid

In this sad crisis : some with speed repair  
To hasten Teucer's coming ; some explore  
The western hills ; the eastern some ; to track  
Th' ill-omened path of your devoted Lord.  
Alas ! he hath deceived me. Well I know  
He loves me not as he was wont to love.  
Ah me ! What shall I do, my son ?—No time  
Is this to linger. Thither will I go  
Where'er my strength avails. Away ! Away !  
Now is their time to act, who fain would snatch  
From death the man, who only hastes to die.

*Ch.* I am prepared ; nor will I show my zeal

---

<sup>7</sup> This day or makes me, or undoes me quite.

In empty words ; the swift unlingering course,  
And the prompt deed shall follow on my speech.

[*Exeunt* CHORUS *and* TECMESSA.

SCENE *changes, and discovers* AJAX *bending over*  
*his Sword.*<sup>8</sup>

Aj. Now stands the murderous sword, where it may  
    pierce  
Most deeply—(had I thought in such an hour  
To reason idly thus)—’Twas Hector’s gift,  
Of strangers ever most abhorred by me,  
And to my sight most hateful. In the soil  
Of hostile Troy ’tis rooted, sharpened late  
To pierce more promptly. I have well prepared  
And fixed it deep, to yield a speedy death,  
And thence to Ajax prove his kindest friend.  
Thus far ’tis well arranged. Next, mighty Jove !

---

<sup>8</sup> Here is a violation of the unity of place, which has been censured by some writers ; but it is essential to the machinery of the piece. Similar instances are found in the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, and the *Alcestis* of Euripides ; and, even were it not so, still, as Potter justly remarks, the single speech of Ajax over his sword is of more value than all the unities.

Thy grace, as is most meet, I now implore,  
 Nor will I ask thee for an ample boon.  
 Send one who may in Teucer's ear report  
 The evil tidings, that he first may bear  
 My corpse, yet reeking from the sword, away,  
 Lest by some foe discovered, I am cast  
 To dogs and birds a vile dishonoured prey.  
 This, Jove, I ask of thee.—I next invoke  
 'Th' infernal Hermes, guide of parted souls,  
 That he would soothe me gently to repose;  
 And grant, when this keen sword has pierced my  
     side,  
 A prompt and painless passage to the shades.  
 I next invoke to aid me those dread Powers,  
 For ever virgins, and of mortal wrongs  
 For ever conscious, swift in keen pursuit,  
 The awful Furies, to attest my doom,  
 By the base sons of Atreus basely slain,  
 And plunge the traitors in an equal fate.  
 As they behold my blood, by mine own hand  
 Poured forth, so be their best-loved children's hands

---

' Tu pias lætis animas reponis  
   Sedibus, virgaque levem coerces  
   Aurea turbam, &c.—Hor. lib. i. 10



Embrued in their's—thus <sup>10</sup> self-destroyers too.  
 Come, ye Avenging Furies, swift and stern,  
 Quaff their warm blood, nor spare the peopled  
                   host.—

Thou, too, whose car o'er yon bright Heaven is  
                   borne,

Look down, O Sun ! upon my native land ;  
 Relax thy golden reins, and deign to bear  
 The joyless tale of misery and of death,  
 To my sad mother and my aged sire.  
 Unhappy Queen ! soon as the tale she hears,  
 What complaints through all the city will she pour !—  
 Yet idly thus to sorrow nought avails ;  
 Let the bold deed at once be dared and done.  
 O Death ! stern Death ! approach, regard me now,  
 Soon shall I hold a nearer converse with thee.  
 Thee, car-borne Sun sublime, for the last time,  
 ' Thee, glorious beam of the resplendent day,

<sup>10</sup> It is well known, that to die by the hand of one's own children was accounted among the Ancients a species of suicide.

<sup>1</sup> It was a general custom among the Ancients to invoke the Sun, as a witness of their sufferings :—

Esto nunc Sol testis, et hæc mihi terra precanti  
 Quam propter tantos potui perferre labores,  
 Et Pater Omnipotens, &c.—Virg. *Æn.* xii. 176.

I now invoke, to hail no more for ever!  
O light—O soil of Salamis beloved,  
My father-land! O dear paternal hearth,  
Thou noble Athens, and my loved compeers—  
Ye founts, ye rivers, and ye Trojan plains,  
Which long have here sustained me—Ajax breathes  
This parting word, a long and last farewell;—  
Next shall I commune with the shades of Hell.

*[Falls upon his sword.]*

*SCENE opens and discovers Chorus divided into Two  
Parties, seeking AJAX.*

*1st Semich.* Toil but increases toil. Where,  
where, O where  
Hath not my search explored?  
And yet no spot his latent path reveals.  
Hist!—hist! I hear a sound.

*2d Semich.* From us it came, thy mates in com-  
mon search.

*1st Semich.* What tidings do ye bring?

*2d Semich.* We traversed all the western naval  
camp.

*1st Semich.* What have ye found?

*2d Semich.* Enough of toil—but nought in sight  
beyond.

*1st Semich.* Nor yet to me, in all mine eastward  
course,  
Appeared a vestige of the man we seek.

## STROPHE.

*Ch.* Who then, O who of all the <sup>2</sup> Powers marine,  
Holding his sleepless watch, intent on toil—  
Which of th' Olympian host, or who that dwells  
By Bosphorus' torrent streams,  
If he hath marked the high-souled chief,  
Will tell me where he roams?  
Unwelcome task for me  
<sup>3</sup> Worn down with age and weakness, wandering  
thus,  
To lead a tedious search, nor trace

<sup>2</sup> Ἀλιδᾶν.—Some render this “the laborious fishermen;” we read ἀλιδῶν, and incline to consider it referring to the Marine Gods, particularly as used in opposition to Ὀλυμπιδῶν, which last Herman proposes as the true reading for Ὀλυμπιδᾶν.

<sup>3</sup> Ἀμεινόν.—Musgrave, referring this word to Ajax, proposes to read μισμηρόν. The Choregus, however, evidently refers to himself, as being an old man.

The frenzied wanderer's path !

*Tec.* Ah me ! ah me !

*Ch.* What groans are echoing from th' adjacent grove ?

*Tec.* Wretch that I am !

*Ch.* The captive of his spear—his hapless bride, Tecmessa, bowed in anguish I behold.

*Tec.* I am undone, my friends, destroyed—undone.

*Ch.* What dost thou mean ?

*Tec.* Here lies our Ajax, slain with recent wound, Pierced by the fatal sword, too well concealed.

*Ch.* Woe, woe for my return !—  
Thus dying, Prince beloved, me too,  
Thy comrade hast thou slain—  
Ah me ! unhappy me !  
More wretched, lady, thou !

*Tec.* Since such his doom, 'tis time indeed to wail !

*Ch.* Say, by whose hand the hapless chieftain died ?

*Tec.* His own—his own, 'tis evident—for the sword,

Deep fixed in earth, on which he fell, confirms it.

*Ch.* Ah ! my unhappy doom !

How didst thou sink in death alone,  
 By friends unguarded all,  
 While I—O most unthinking—most unwise,  
 Slept negligent—Where, where  
 Lies the unbending chief,  
 Ajax of hapless name?

*Tec.* <sup>4</sup> Thou must not gaze upon him. I will fold  
 This ample robe around his lifeless form;—  
 Alas! no friendly eye could bear to look  
 On the wide nostril, spouting sable gore,  
 On the wide wound his own fierce hand hath made.  
 What shall I do? What friend shall bear thee  
 hence?

Where, where is Teucer?—How will he arrive,  
 Would he but come indeed, in time to pay  
 The last sad duties to a brother's corpse!  
 Ill-fated Ajax, man of matchless mould,  
 Such are thy miseries, as might wring the tears  
 Of prompt compassion from a foeman's eye.

---

<sup>4</sup> This is an extremely delicate and accurate touch of nature. So tender was the affection of Tecmessa for her murdered Ajax, that she could not endure even his dead body to become an object of horror or disgust. The dying Hippolitus appears to have been conscious of a similar feeling:—

Κρύψον δὲ μὲ πρόσωπον, ὥς ταχὺς, πέπλοις.

## ANTISTROPHE.

*Ch.* This was thy purpose then, thy purpose this,  
O thou of firm and unrelenting soul !  
By resolute death to end thy boundless toils.—  
Such were in night's mid gloom,  
In day's broad splendour, such thine anguished  
groans,  
On Atreus' race abhorred  
Invoking curses dire.  
That instant was the source of all our woes,  
When they proposed for valour's meed  
Achilles' radiant arms.

*Tec.* Unhappy me !

*Ch.* That grief, I know, lies deep within thy  
breast.

*Tec.* Ah me ! ah me !

*Ch.* I marvel not at thine incessant groans,  
Lady, but now of one so dear deprived.

*Tec.* Thou canst but think—'tis mine to feel too  
deeply.

*Ch.* I own it.

*Tec.* Ah me ! my son, what yoke of bondage  
base

Must we endure ; what haughty Lord obey ?

*Ch.* Alas ! thou hast recalled  
<sup>5</sup> The dark unutterable deed  
 Of the stern kings, unmoved  
 In this our agony—  
 May Heaven avert the blow !

*Tec.* It had not fallen thus, but Heaven decreed.

*Ch.* Woes far too heavy have the Gods imposed.

*Tec.* Yet such affliction for Ulysses' sake,  
 Jove's hostile daughter, stern Athena, sends.

*Ch.* The Chief of many toils  
 In his dark soul will doubtless mock  
 Our tears with bitterest scorn,  
 And laugh insulting at the woes we bear  
 For deeds in frenzy wrought !  
 So, too, the Brother-Kings  
 Hearing the welcome tale.

*Tec.* And let them laugh exulting in his woes ;  
 Perchance, though living, they revered him not,  
 In battle's hour they may lament him dead.  
 The fool, though grasping in his hand a prize,

<sup>5</sup> \**Αναυδον*.—This word, according to Musgrave, generally signifies *mutum, taciturnum* ; he, consequently, proposes to reject it, and read *αναιδων*. This, however, is unnecessary, since, as Erfurdt observes, it denotes the same with *αναίδητος* and *αναίδης*, *infandum*.

Heeds not its value, till 'tis lost for ever.  
 More bitter was his death to me than sweet  
 To them ; but joyous to himself :—the death  
 He prayed for—wished for—now hath closed his  
       woes.

How then can they insult a doom like this ?  
 'Twas by the Gods he perished, not by them.  
 Let then Ulysses vent his empty taunts.  
 They have no longer Ajax—while to me,  
 Dying, he leaves dejection and despair.

*Teu.* Alas ! alas ! *[within.*

*Ch.* Hist ! for I seem to hear the voice of Teucer,  
 Uttering deep groans, accordant with our ills.

*Enter TEUCER.*

TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

*Teu.* O dearest Ajax,—O most honoured brother !  
 Hast thou then perished e'en as rumour tells ?

*Ch.* Yes, Teucer ; thou must hear the mournful  
       truth :

He is no more !

*Teu.* Ah miserable me !



What heaviest grief is this?

*Ch.* In woes like these—

*Teu.* Unhappy—most unhappy!

*Ch.* 'Tis well to weep.

*Teu.* O most disastrous doom!

*Ch.* Aye! too disastrous, Teucer.

*Teu.* Wretched man!

But say, what of his son? Where is he now,  
In Trojan ground?

*Ch.* Alone, within the tents,

*Teu.* Fly then, and bring him hither to our pre-  
sence;

Lest some fierce foe secure him, as the whelp  
Of the forsaken lioness. Away!

Be prompt, assist him. All are prone to tread  
Upon departed greatness.

*Ch.* While the life  
Still warmed his breast, it was his latest charge,  
That thou shouldst guard, as now thou guard'st,  
his son.

*Teu.* O sight of all that ever met mine eye,  
Most fraught with anguish! O ill-omened path  
That led me here, of all I ever trod,  
Tending to pangs that wound my heart most  
deeply;

When first I heard thy fate, beloved Ajax,  
Swift I pursued, and tracked thy steps in vain.  
A sad report of thee, as by some God,  
Was quickly blazoned through the Argive host,  
That thou hadst perished ; I in sorrow heard,  
Deep groaning, though afar ; I see it now,  
And sink in heavier anguish. Come, remove  
The veil, that I may witness all my woe.  
O sight of horror !—wild excess of rage !  
How many woes thy death has sown for me !  
Ah whither, to what people can I fly,  
I, in thy need who was not nigh to aid thee ?  
Will Telamon, thy father and mine own,  
Meet me with smiling brow and favouring heart,  
Unaccompanied by thee ? How should he thus,  
Who smiled not, e'en when better fortune crowned  
me ?  
What will he hide ? What keen upbraidings  
spare ?  
Will he not brand me as the base-born child  
Of bondage, who, through mean, unmanly, fear,  
Betrayed thee, dearest Ajax ; or through fraud,  
That by thy death exalted, I might win  
Thy kingdom for mine heritage ? Thus incensed,  
By nature wrathful, and morose with age,

My sire will vent th' unmerited reproach ;  
 And last,<sup>5</sup> an outcast from my native land  
 Shall I be thrust ; accounted as a slave  
 Unmeet for freedom. This at home awaits me ;  
 While stern and many are my foes at Troy,  
 My aids but few and feeble. All these ills  
 Thy death, my brother, hath on me imposed.  
 Ah me ! what shall I do ? How shall I tear  
 Thy corpse, unhappy, from this deadly sword,  
 Whose point hath shed thy life-blood ? Didst thou  
                   know

Hector, himself no more, would cause thy ruin ?  
 Mark, by the Gods ! these hapless heroes' fate.  
 Bound by the very belt which Ajax gave  
 To the swift chariot, Hector breathed his last ;  
 He, too, possessing Hector's fatal gift, ..

<sup>5</sup> This presage of Teucer was verified by the event, as he was, on his return from Troy, expelled from Salamis by his indignant father.

Teucer Salamina patremque  
 Cum fugeret.

Hor. Od. vii. lib. 1.

Atque equidem Teucrum memini Sidona venire  
 Finibus expulsum patriis, nova regna petentem.

Virg. Æn. i. 619.

By it hath perished with a mortal wound.  
Did not some Fury forge that sword, and Death,  
A stern artificer ! that baldrick weave ?  
These, then, I ween, the Gods for man ordain ;  
These, and each strange vicissitude of life.  
If others think not thus, let them adhere  
To their own sentence ; I am fixed in mine.

*Ch.* Forbear thy plaints ; bethink thee how t'  
entomb

Thy brother's corpse in earth, and how reply.  
I see a foe approaching, who perchance  
Comes, like a ruffian, to insult our woes.

*Teu.* Whom of the host advancing dost thou see ?

*Ch.* 'Tis Meneläus, in whose cause we sailed  
From Greece.

*Teu.* I see him ; he is near us now,  
And may be promptly known.

*Enter* MENELAUS.

MENELAUS, TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

*Men.* Ho ! thee I call.  
Raise not that lifeless body with thy hands,

But leave it as it lies.

*Teu.* Why dost thou speak  
In terms so haughty?

*Men.* Thus have we decreed;  
And thus th' imperial chieftain.

*Teu.* Wilt thou say  
What plea thou bring'st to justify the deed?

*Men.* Because, when we had trusted from his  
home  
He came to Greece a friend and firm ally,  
Soon in the chief we found a deadlier foe,  
Than e'en the adverse Trojans;—who conspired  
The death of all our army, and by night  
Rushed forth to slay us with insidious spear;  
And, but some God his frenzied madness foiled,  
Ours must the doom have been that now is his;  
And we had perished by as base a death,  
While he survived; but Heaven reversed the wrong,  
And on the senseless herds his fury fell.

<sup>6</sup>Wherefore be none so potent, as to hide

---

<sup>6</sup> This brutality was too common among the ancients. It was the privation of sepulchral honours that embittered the last moments of the dying Hector; and Turnus, while he will not directly supplicate for life, implores at least this boon.

His breathless body in a decent tomb;  
But, cast unhonoured on the yellow sand,  
A prey to ravening sea-birds let it lie.  
Nor thou at this indulge unlicensed rage.  
If, while he lived, our righteous rule he scorned,  
At least in death our sway shall reach him now,  
Constrained, though thou withstand, by mightier  
force.

Living, he never hearkened to my word,  
And stubborn soul it speaks, when men ungraced  
With power, are backward to obey their Masters.  
Laws in a state could ne'er be well observed,  
Unless enforced by salutary fear;  
Nor will an army bend submiss to sway,  
Unchecked by reverence, and by dread unawed.  
Man should reflect, though strong in corporal  
might,  
A trivial ill may work his future ruin.  
When fear is blended with ingenuous shame,  
The man, of both observant, is secure.

---

Et me, seu corpus spoliatum lumine mavis,  
Redde meis.

This passage conveys no very favourable opinion of the husband of Helen, and the brother of the King of Men.

Where license free for lawless outrage reigns,  
That state, though sped by Fortune's favouring  
gales,

Must sink, ere long, in Ruin's gulf immersed.

Ever let me such wholesome awe observe,

Nor let us deem, that acting as we list,

We shall not pay a penalty of woe.

Alternate these succeed. This man before

Was insolent and proud ; 'tis now my turn,

And I forewarn thee not t' entomb the chief,

Lest, granting him a grave, thou dig thine own.

*Ch.* O Menelaus ! since thy words are sage,  
With senseless insult tread not on the lifeless.

*Teu.* Henceforth I ne'er can wonder, if a man  
Sprung from ignoble lineage widely errs ;  
Since chiefs, who vaunt them in ancestral fame,  
Err in their reasoning with vain words like these.  
Recur to thy commencement. Canst thou say  
Thou broughtest Ajax, as to Greece allied ?  
Sailed he not forth, sole Master of himself ?  
How wert thou made his general ? Whence hast thou  
Right to command the troops he brought from home ?  
Thou cam'st the King of Sparta, not our chief.  
Nor hadst thou aught of juster rule o'er him,  
Than he might claim o'er thee. Hither thou saild'st,

Thyself another's subject,—not the chief  
Of all,—that thou shouldst thus o'er Ajax lord :  
' Rule where thy sway is owned, and lofty vaunts  
On thine own vassals vent ; but for this man,—  
Though thou, or e'en thy brother-chief forbid,—  
I will entomb him with funereal rites,  
Thine idle threats disdaining. For thy wife  
He did not serve in battle, like the tribes  
Compelled to join the mercenary war ;  
But by the oath himself had sworn constrained,  
Not for thy sake. He ne'er esteemed the worthless.  
Go then,—bring many heralds in thy train,—  
Bring e'en the imperial chief ; thy clamorous threats  
Shall never move my purpose, while thou art  
What now I know thee.

*Ch.* Nay, I cannot praise  
Such vehemence, while woes are thick around us.  
Reproach like this, though just, severely wounds.

*Men.* This archer thinks not meanly of himself.

*Teu.* No ! 'twas no vain nor worthless art I learned.

*Men.* Great were thine insolence, didst thou  
wear a shield !

---

<sup>7</sup> Go ;—show your slaves how choleric you are,  
And make your bondmen tremble.



*Teu.* <sup>8</sup> Defenceless thus I would not shrink from thee,

Though cased in panoply.

*Men.* Thy words indeed  
Bespeak a doughty soul.

*Teu.* Conscious of right  
The soul may proudly soar.

*Men.* Is it then right  
To grace with honour the base wretch who slew me?

*Teu.* Slew thee? O wondrous! slain and yet  
alive?

*Men.* The Gods preserved my life,—in his intent  
I died.

*Teu.* Then dare not thou despise the Gods,  
Thus by the Gods preserved.

*Men.* What, do I scorn  
The laws of Heaven?

<sup>8</sup> *ψιλλός*: the *ψιλλοί* wore no defensive armour, and were inferior in dignity to the *οπλιταί*. Bowmen were accounted the least honourable of warriors, as we learn from the reproach of Diomed to Paris, in the eleventh Iliad.

Thrice armed is he that hath his quarrel just;  
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,  
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

Shakspeare, Henry VI.

*Teu.* Yes ; if thou wilt not grant  
The dead a tomb.

*Men.* I will not grant my foe  
A sepulchre,—such grace would ill become me.

*Teu.* Did Ajax ever beard thee as a foe ?

*Men.* I hated him because he hated me ;  
To this thou art no stranger.

*Teu.* Aye, by him  
A false and fraudulent voter wert thou proved.

*Men.* This from the umpires, not from me, arose.

*Teu.* For many wiles canst thou in secret frame.

*Men.* These words shall cost thee sorrow.

*Teu.* None so keen  
I deem, as that I have imposed on thee.

*Men.* One word I speak. He must not be en-  
tombbed.

*Teu.* In one I answer. He *shall* be entombed !

*Men.* I once beheld a man of daring speech,  
Who, while the heavens grew dark, enjoined the  
crew

To spread their swelling sails ; but when the storm  
Infuriate raged, his voice was heard no more ;  
Then, in his cloak enfolded, every foot  
At will might trample o'er his prostrate form.  
So thine offensive clamours will be checked,

When from a little cloud the mighty storm  
Shall burst in wrath, and curb thy lengthened vaunts.

*Teu.* I too have seen a man, by folly swoln,  
Who laughed insulting at a neighbour's woe.  
One like myself beheld him, and in wrath,  
Resembling mine, such words as these returned ;  
“ Presume not, mortal, to insult the dead.  
If thou persist, know, certain vengeance waits  
thee.”

So he, thus present, warned th' insensate foe.  
I see him now ; he is, or much I err,  
No other than thyself. Say, speak I now  
In parables obscurely ?

*Men.* I depart.

It ill beseems the man to threat in words,  
Who has the power by force to work his will.

*Teu.* Away ;—I too esteem it foul reproach  
Idly to babble with a fool like thee.

[*Exit* MENELAUS.]

TEUCER, CHORUS.

*Ch.* Some strife of dire contention must arise.  
But, Teucer, haste thee to explore

Some cave, where Ajax may repose  
In his sepulchral dwelling, to mankind  
An ever-memorable name !

*Teu.* Mark, too, in season for our task most meet,  
His wife and son are present, to assist  
The obsequies of the unhappy dead.  
Come hither, child, and, standing near the corpse,  
A suppliant, touch the sire who gave thee life.  
And sit imploring there, fast in thy hand  
Grasping my hair, thy mother's, and thine own,  
The suppliant's treasured prayer. If of the host  
One but presume to force thee from the dead,  
Let that vile wretch on earth unburied lie,  
And from the root for ever be he plucked  
With all his race, as I cut off this hair.  
Take it, my child,—preserve it,—from this spot  
Let none constrain thee,—to thy sire cling fast.  
Ye too, not women in the garb of men,  
Stand close around, and aid him till I come,  
Forbid who may, our Ajax to entomb.

[*Exit* TEUCER.]

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

What then shall be the bound? O where

Shall close the train of wandering years,  
 Which ever fraught with restless care,  
 With martial toils, and ceaseless fears,  
 'At Troy detains me yet,—a name  
 To Greece of woe and darkest shame!

## ANTISTROPHE I.

O! had he first dissolved in air,  
 Or sought our common home, the grave,  
 Who taught these hateful arms to bear,  
 And the <sup>10</sup> sad boon to Hellas gave.  
 O toils of toils prolific still!  
 He wreaked on man man's deadliest ill.

## STROPHE II.

He gave me not the crown to twine,  
 Or quaff the sparkling bowl;  
 To revel in the generous wine,  
 To raise the dulcet strain divine,

<sup>9</sup> 'Ευρώδη Τροίαν—*ivḗōdh*, properly *squalidam*, *sordidam*. But Troy was remarkable for its magnificence. We may either refer the epithet to the low and marshy plains about Troy, or adopt Lobeck's conjecture of *ivḗvōdh*.

<sup>10</sup> Κοινὴν Ἀγῆν, *communem noxam*.—Musgr. Rather, *bellum quod sociatis viribus gerunt*.

Or melt, while night's mid splendours shine,  
In blissful love's control.

To love, sweet love, I wake no more ;  
But 'cheerless lie on this bleak shore,  
While aye o'er mine unsheltered head  
The damp chill dews of Heaven are shed,  
Sad Troy's memorials sole !

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Till now from fears that frown by night,  
Or darts that wound by day,  
My shield was Ajax, stern in fight ;—  
He yields to some loathed Dæmon's might—  
And now o'er me what new delight  
Shall beam its genial ray ?  
O that I stood on that proud steep  
Which beetles o'er the maddening deep,  
Where 'Sunium rears its lofty shore ;—  
Then, sacred Athens, might I pour  
To thee a livelier lay !

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Αμέριμος, for πολυμέριμος. It may, however, be translated *neglectus*.

<sup>2</sup> Sunium was a promontory of Athens, at the extremity of Attica : there was a small port and town, near which Minerva had a splendid temple.

*Re-enter* TEUCER.

TEUCER, TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

*Teu.* I hurried back, for I perceived our chief,  
Stern Agamemnon, hither bend his steps.  
No mild address his lowering brow portends.

*Enter* AGAMEMNON.

AGAMEMNON, TEUCER, TECMESSA, EURYSACES,  
CHORUS.

*Agam.* Do they then tell me thou hast dared to  
vent

Reproach on us, and thus unpunished too,  
Thou, the base offspring of a captured slave?  
Had but thy mother sprung from noble race,  
How high had been thy vaunts, how fierce thy pride,  
Since, weak thyself as nothing, thou dost strive  
For one who now is nothing; and hast vowed  
That nor commanders of the Grecian host,

Nor of the fleet, nor e'en thyself, we came ;  
But Ajax, as thou said'st, to Ilion sailed  
His own sole sovereign. Is't not foulest shame  
To hear such vauntings from a slave like thee ?  
And in whose cause hast thou so proudly clamoured ?

Where hath he met, or where withstood the foe,  
And I have shrunk or trembled ? Hath our Greece  
Through all her hosts no men, save him alone ?  
In evil hour, it seems, did I proclaim  
To Greece the contest for Achilles' arms,  
If Teucer brand me in each place a villain ;  
And ye, the conquered, will not yield the prize,  
When by the umpires' general voice assigned ;  
But still pursue us with reproaches keen,  
And, when defeated, secret treasons frame.  
Did acts like these prevail, no laws could stand  
On firm and lasting basis, should we wrest  
His guerdon from the victor, and award  
The proud pre-eminence to grace the vanquished.  
But this must be restrained. Not corporal might,  
Nor sinewy frame on firmest footing stands ;  
The wise and prudent are the prosperous still.  
By a small lash in its appointed path  
The mighty ox is unresisting led.



Nay, o'er thee too, such medicine I perceive  
Stealing, unless a wiser mood return,  
Who for what once was man, but now a shade,  
Dost brawl, and give free license to thy tongue.  
Wilt thou not bend submissive—wilt not own  
Thine abject baseness, and bring hither one  
Of freeborn race to speak while thou art silent?  
How should I catch the purport of thy words,  
Who am not practised in barbaric tongue?

*Ch.* O that a soul more temperate dwelt in both!  
I know not what to wish more meet for either.

*Teu.* <sup>3</sup> Alas! how soon the service of the dead  
Fades from remembrance, and is all effaced,  
If this vain man so lightly deems of thee,  
My Ajax, nor accords the slightest grace  
To one whose life so often in the field  
Hath on his cause been perilled! All thy deeds  
Are swept unheeded from his memory now.  
Thou, of so many and such senseless words,  
Say, hast thou no remembrance, when enclosed

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<sup>3</sup> But yesterday the name of Cæsar might  
Have stood against the world; now lies he there,  
And none so poor to do him reverence.

Within your rampart, arms availing nought,  
Alone he stemmed the tide of adverse war,  
And singly brought deliverance ; when the flame  
Curled round the ships, and lightened o'er the  
fleet,

What time your naval trench stern Hector leaped  
Impetuous on the host ? Who checked him then ?  
Whose bold emprise was this ? Was it not his,  
Who ne'er, thou say'st, his fearless foot advanced ?  
Nay, more ; with Hector matched in single strife  
By lot, and unconstrained, undaunted he  
Went forth to meet him, casting in the midst  
No fraudulent lot, no <sup>4</sup>clod of kneaded clay,  
But that which bounding and elastic sprung  
From out the crested helmet. Such the deeds  
Of this bold chief. I, too, was present there,  
This slave, this barbarous mother's baseborn child.  
Wretch, with what view this insult didst thou aim ?  
Dost thou not know, the father of that sire

---

<sup>4</sup> Allusion is here made to the artifice practised by Cresphontes, at the division of Peloponnesus among the Heraclidæ, that Messenia might fall to his share. Probably, however, some stratagem actually practised by Menelaus is also referred to. See page 155.

Who gave thee life, was Pelops, of old time  
A barbarous <sup>5</sup> Phrygian, and thy father too  
Was Atreus, vilest, guiltiest of mankind,  
Who his own brother at a banquet lured  
On his own sons to feed; thy mother, too,  
A Cretan, whom the sire that gave her life  
Cast with her paramour to the wild waves,  
Food for the ravening monsters of the main?  
Born of such lineage, canst thou scorn *my* birth,  
Sprung from a noble sire, great Telamon,  
Who, best and bravest of the host approved,  
Took for the partner of his nuptial couch  
My mother—<sup>6</sup> her, too, born of royal race,  
Daughter of high Laomedon?—such meed,  
By valour earned, to him Alcides gave.

---

<sup>5</sup> Rather, a Lydian. The difference, however, is not material, as the boundaries of Phrygia and Lydia, which were adjacent provinces, cannot be accurately defined. Aërope, the mother of the Atridæ, (who were the grandsons, not the sons, of Atreus,) was condemned to be thrown into the sea, on account of her infidelities, but preserved, and given in marriage to Plisthenes, the son of Atreus.

<sup>6</sup> Hesione, daughter of Laomedon, whom Hercules, having rescued from a sea-monster, gave in marriage to his friend and associate, Telamon.

Shall I, thus noble, and from parents sprung  
Thus noble, cease my kinsman to revere,  
Whom, prostrate in such miseries, thou wouldst  
leave

Unsepulchred, nor blushest at the word ?

But know thou well, if thou shalt cast him forth,  
Thou wilt cast forth us three, who kneel beside him.  
'Tis better far, in honourable toil,  
To die with glory in my kinsman's cause,  
Than for thy wife's or for thy brother's sake.  
Enough—see not mine interest, but thine own.  
If thou dost work me wrong, ere long thou'lt wish  
E'en coward fear had curbed thy wrath to me.

*Enter* ULYSSES.

ULYSSES, AGAMEMNON, TEUCER, TECMESSA,  
EURYSACES, CHORUS.

*Ch.* In season, O King Ulysses, art thou come,  
So thou wilt quench, and not inflame the strife.

*Ulys.* What is it, soldiers ? from afar I heard  
Th' Atridæ clamorous o'er the hero's corpse.

*Agam.* Have we not heard rude and unseemly words,

O Prince Ulysses, from this man before thee?

*Ulys.* What words? I blame not him, who,  
when he hears

Upbraidings keen, in haughty tone replies.

*Agam.* Such he hath heard; for such his deeds  
deserved.

*Ulys.* Why, what hath he achieved, to work  
thee wrong?

*Agam.* He will not leave this body unentombed;  
But will, he says, in my despite inter it.

*Ulys.* May, then, a friend presume to speak the  
truth,

Yet, as before, thy hearty friendship share?

*Agam.* Speak; I were senseless to forbid thy  
words,

Whom of all Greece I count my firmest friend.

*Ulys.* Then hear me. Do not unrelenting thus,  
By the great Gods, cast noble Ajax forth  
Unsepulchred, nor let ungoverned wrath  
Subdue thy calmer mood, and urge thee on  
Thus, in thy hate, to trample upon justice.  
In all our host, he was my deadliest foe,

Since first Achilles' glorious arms were mine ;  
Yet him, of soul thus adverse, in such scorn  
I never can account, as to deny  
7 Here lies the bravest of the Greeks who came—  
Except Achilles—to the Trojan towers ;  
Thus to degrade the chief would shame thyself.  
Not him alone, but Heaven's eternal laws,  
Wouldst thou contemn. Unjust it is to wrong  
The brave in death, though most abhorred in life.

*Agam.* Dost thou, Ulysses, in his cause with-  
stand me ?

*Ulys.* I do. I did but hate him while my hate  
Was sanctified by honour.

*Agam.* Shouldst thou not  
Insult the lifeless corpse ?

*Ulys.* Rejoice not thou,  
O son of Atreus, in ignoble triumphs.

---

7 This earth, that bears thee dead,  
Bears not alive so brave a gentleman.  
If thou wert sensible of courtesy,  
I should not make so great a show of zeal,  
But let thy favours hide thy mangled face.  
Adieu ! and take thy praise with thee to Heaven.

Shakspeare, Hen. IV.

*Agam.* No easy task is piety to Kings.

*Ulys.* Kings should give way to sage and prudent friends.

*Agam.* The virtuous man should yield to those who rule.

*Ulys.* Cease ; vanquished but by friends, thou still art victor.

*Agam.* Remember well to whom such grace thou giv'st.

*Ulys.* He was my foe, but still most truly noble.

*Agam.* What wilt thou then? Why dost thou thus revere

A foe departed ?

*Ulys.* On his virtue more  
I dwell, than on my hatred.

*Agam.* By mankind,  
Those who thus reason oft are counted senseless.

*Ulys.* They who are friendliest now, ere long  
may turn  
To bitterest foes.

*Agam.* And wouldst thou make or praise  
Such friends ?

*Ulys.* I praise not unrelenting souls.

*Agam.* This day as cowards wilt thou brand us  
both!

*Ulys.* Nay, but th' assembled Greeks will laud  
your justice.

*Agam.* Thou dost persuade me then t' entomb  
the dead?

*Ulys.* Yes; for the same drear grave awaits me  
too.

*Agam.* How promptly each fulfils, what to his  
wish

Is most congenial!

*Ulys.* What becomes me more  
For mine own welfare than to labour thus?

*Agam.* This shall be called thy deed—not mine.

*Ulys.* As thou  
Shalt do, so all men will esteem thee righteous.

*Agam.* Of this be well assured: such grace to  
thee,

Or e'en a greater, I would promptly yield.

But he, in life or death, alike shall share

My just abhorrence. Work thy will in all.

*Ch.* Whoe'er, Ulysses, lightly recks of thee,  
In soul and thought so noble, widely errs.

*Ulys.* And thus to Teucer do I now proclaim,



My friendship shall exceed my former hate.  
With him I wish t' entomb the mighty dead,  
Partake his labours, and <sup>s</sup> omit no rite  
That man can pay to grace his noblest peer.

*Tes.* Noblest Ulysses, to thy words I yield  
My warm applause; far hast thou passed our hopes;  
Since thou, of Greece my brother's mortal foe,  
Alone stood'st forth to aid, nor hast endured  
The living thus should trample on the lifeless;  
When that infuriate leader of the host,  
With his most worthy brother, willed to cast  
The hero forth,—unhonoured—unentombed.  
For this may He who rules Olympus' brow,  
Th' Eternal Sire;—may ever-wakeful Furies,  
And Justice, following with unerring step,  
Consign these villains to as base a doom,  
As for the chief their guilty aim designed.  
But thee, brave son of old Laertes, thee  
I may not grant our pious task to share;  
Lest such an act offend the mighty shade;

---

<sup>s</sup> Let every honour to a soldier due  
Attend this hero to the tomb.

In all beside befriended us. If thou send  
Some from the host our funeral task to aid,  
It will not be unwelcome. On my care  
All other rites devolve ; and know, I deem  
Thy deeds to us have been most truly noble.

*Ulys.* My will had been to aid thee ; since in this  
To share thy toil be less congenial deemed,  
I go, assenting promptly to thy thought.

[*Exit ULYSSES.*

TEUCER, TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

*Teu.* Enough ; much time is now consumed.  
For you, let some with duteous hand  
The hollowed trench prepare,—some rear  
The lofty tripod o'er the flame,  
For due ablutions meet ; let one  
Bear from the tent the Hero's arms,  
And martial garb of war.  
Thou, child, thy feeble strength exert ;  
Raise,—softly raise,—thy sire, and lift  
His side with care ; still the warm veins  
Through the wide gash exhale the sable gore.

Advance, whoever of friendly soul  
Is nigh ;—haste, haste,—alas ! I deem  
Ne'er wilt thou this sad task perform .  
For one of mortal birth more brave  
Than what was Ajax once.

*Ch.* How much doth sage experience teach man-  
kind.

But, ere he mark th' event, no prescient seer  
The issue of the future can foretell !

# PHILOCTETES.



## PHILOCTETES.

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**SIMPLICITY**, when it does not degenerate into tameness and insipidity, is among the most attractive graces of poetry; and it is less the indication of superior genius to have framed an elaborate and complicated plot, than to have erected, out of scanty and apparently inadequate materials, the superstructure of an interesting poem. Thus, the single subject of the Iliad is the anger of Achilles, with the events naturally arising out of it, and the inferiority of the Æneid to that first production of human intellect is, in no respect, more strikingly evident than in the more diffuse and complex nature of the subject. Thus, also, the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of our

Author, though unrivalled for dexterity in the management of the plot, and the developement of the catastrophe, is yet scarcely so bold and masterly an effort of genius as the drama before us; the sole argument of which is the endeavour of Ulysses to wrest, by the agency of Neoptolemus, the invulnerable arms from the custody of Philoctetes.

The story of the son of Pæas is familiar to the classical reader. Having been requited for his fidelity to the deified Hercules with the bequest of the hero's arms, he repaired with the confederate Greeks, as bound by oath, to the siege of Troy. There, either from the resentment of Juno on account of the services he had rendered to Hercules, or, as other authors relate, in consequence of the evasion of a solemn oath, by which he had bound himself never to reveal the spot where the ashes of the hero had been deposited, he received a deadly wound in his foot, from the dropping of an arrow which had been tinged with the venom of the Lernæan hydra. So noisome was the odour issuing from his wound that his removal from the camp became a measure of imperative necessity, and he was accordingly allured, by Ulysses, on board a

galley, under the specious pretence of having his wound cured by the sons of Æsculapius, and treacherously left on a desert part of the Isle of Lemnos. In this state of agony and desolation, with no witnesses of his misery but the inanimate objects around him, for which custom has taught him to cherish a kind of melancholy regard, has the unhappy exile lingered for upwards of nine years, supporting life only by the aid of his arms, and still nourishing, amidst his despair, the deadliest animosity against the traitors who had betrayed him. It is at this juncture that Ulysses and Neoptolemus, who have been deputed by the Grecian chiefs to seize and convey him to Troy, (which cannot be taken without his assistance,) arrive upon the island ;—and here commences the business of the drama.

If there be any spectacle peculiarly interesting to the observer of human nature, it is the contemplation of a generous mind reluctantly yielding to the suggestions of artifice and duplicity ; and, though seduced, for a moment, by the love of glory, into the commission of baseness, yet struggling with better feelings, till at last the native integrity



of the honourable mind rises triumphant over the arts of the deceiver. Such a character is Neoptolemus. Young, ingenuous, and upright, he recoils with indignation from the smooth sophistry of artifice and fraud—he is only reconciled to it by the specious lure of fame—he perseveres in the deceit so long as he is encouraged by the presence of his wily confederate; but when left to himself—to the silent remonstrances of conscience—the innate generosity of his heart resumes its ascendancy, nor can he consent to purchase his own glory and the welfare of Greece, at the price of his honour. We recognize in him all the lineaments of that high-souled and impetuous chief, to whom is attributed, by the Master-Poet, that memorable sentiment:—

Who dares think one thing, and another tell,  
My soul detests him as the gates of hell.

Scarcely less interesting, though under a very different aspect, is the character of Philoctetes himself. The lonely exile has become familiarized to misery without being resigned to it; all around him has assumed the desolate aspect of his own forlorn condition, and yet, without any hope of

deliverance, the remembrance of his own country is the more endeared to him, as he is separated from it by a more hopeless and insuperable barrier. The 'Amor patriæ' burns inextinguishably in his heart. The very garb of Greece is beauty to his eye; the accents of a Greek are music to his ear. Absorbed as he might have been in the contemplation of his own sorrows, (and there is no teacher of selfishness like sorrow,) he has not yet forgotten his former companions and confederates in arms, and his inquiries after them are urged with a tenderness and solicitude truly pathetic. Even the misanthropic scepticism which he has imbibed is accordant with the general tone and temper of his mind; and, under such circumstances, a *heathen* may be excused for calling in question the impartiality and justice of the Gods. It was reserved for a more enlightened poet than Sophocles to deliver that beautiful aphorism—

All partial evil—universal good.

This drama, however, possesses a beauty peculiar to itself. Scenic descriptions of the utmost richness and luxuriance are, indeed, interspersed

throughout all the writings of Sophocles, but the drama before us presents by far the finest specimen of his descriptive talent. With admirable judgment he has put the delineation of the surrounding wildness and desolation into the mouth of Philoctetes, the sombre temper of whose mind would necessarily invest it with additional gloom. Indeed, throughout the whole drama, the prevailing charm is Nature; and however destitute it may be of that which is calculated to gratify the sickly and vitiated taste of a modern audience, the ravings of guilty passion, and the declamation of tumid and unnatural heroism, we do not hesitate to maintain, that so long as natural feeling, correct delineation, a lively exhibition of human character, and an intimate knowledge of the human heart, possess the power of awakening interest and exciting the affections, that power will belong, in an eminent degree, to the Philoctetes of Sophocles.



## **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

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**ULYSSES.**

**NEOPTOLEMUS.**

**CHORUS.**

**PHILOCTETES.**

**SPY, DISGUISED AS A MERCHANT.**

**HERCULES.**

# PHILOCTETES.

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ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS.

*Ulys.* This is the shore of that sea-circled land,  
Lemnos, ' by mortal foot untrodden still,  
Uncheered by mortal dwelling—here, O son  
Of great Achilles, once our mightiest chief;—

---

' It must not be inferred from this expression, that the whole island of Lemnos was uninhabited; the contrary being established by the authority of Homer, *Odyss.* viii. 283 ;

*Λῆμονι, εὐκτίμενον πτολίεθρον.*

but simply that part of the coast on which Philoctetes had been left, whose range, from the nature of his wound, could not have been very extensive.

Here, Neoptolemus, in time long past,  
I left the son of Pœas, Melia's lord,  
At the high mandate of the brother kings ;  
When from his foot such noxious venom oozed,  
That nor in reverent silence to the Gods  
Libations could we pour, nor victims slay ;  
But through the camp his wild ill-boding shrieks  
Incessant echoed.—Yet what need of words  
Like these?—No time for tedious converse now,  
Lest he detect my coming, and I lose  
The train of wiles with which I think to snare him.  
Now 'tis thy task my purpose to subserve,  
And first seek out a cave, with double mouth  
So formed, that either end in winter's chill  
Receives the radiance of the genial sun ;  
And in the sultry summer cooling gales  
Breathe through the cleft, inviting soft repose.  
On the left hand thou mayst at once descry  
A limpid fountain, if 'tis flowing still.  
Approach in silence, and inform me first  
If on this spot, or elsewhere, he resides ;  
That thou mayst hear, and I impart the rest  
Of my design, and thus our task be shared.

*Neop.* No distant toil, Ulysses, dost thou give—  
Methinks I see the cave thou hast described.

*Ulys.* Above us, or below? I see it not.

*Neop.* 'Tis that above—no trace of footsteps nigh.

*Ulys.* Look, if reclined in sleep he rest within.

*Neop.* To me the habitation seems devoid  
Of human tenant.

*Ulys.* Is there nought within  
Formed for domestic uses?

*Neop.* Yes; with leaves  
The cave is strewed, as one had there reposed.

*Ulys.* Is all deserted—is there nought beside  
Beneath the rocky roof?

*Neop.* A drinking cup  
Of wood, by some rude workman roughly wrought;  
With <sup>2</sup> implements to rouse the dormant flame.

*Ulys.* The scanty store, of which thou speak'st,  
is his.

*Neop.* Alas, alas! here, drying in the sun,  
A few loose rags are laid, discoloured all  
With fetid gore.

*Ulys.* Here then, beyond all doubt,  
The man resides, nor is he distant far;

<sup>2</sup> Πυρσῖα.—This word may either signify firewood, or the implements for striking fire. The latter supposition, as appears from line 296, is the more probable.



How should a wretch, with cureless wounds diseased,  
Traverse a lengthened space? Or he hath gone  
To seek for food, or haply knows some herb  
Lenient to soothe the anguish of his wound.  
Send then this man to keep attentive watch,  
Lest sudden he surprise me,—whom of Greece  
He most desires within his reach to view.

*Neop.* Nay, he is gone, and shall observe the  
path—

If thou wouldst aught beside, unfold thy will.

*Ulys.* Son of Achilles, it behoves thee now,  
In the good cause that led thee here, to act  
With firm resolve, and not in might alone;  
But, when thou hear'st new schemes, untold before,  
To aid my plans, since for this end thou cam'st.

*Neop.* What then dost thou enjoin me?

*Ulys.* Thou must seek  
To win with wily and ensnaring arts  
The soul of Philoctetes. When he asks  
“Who art thou, and from whence?” reply at once  
Achilles' son—this must not be suppressed.  
Say thou art sailing homeward, and hast left  
The naval host of Greece, with deadliest wrath  
Indignant, since they lured thee from thy home  
With prayers, as one to whose resistless arm

Alone should Ilion yield ;—yet, when thou cam'st  
Demanding, as thy right, Achilles' arms,  
Disdained thy righteous plea, and gave the prize  
To grace Ulysses. Pour upon my name  
The torrent of reproach and foulest scorn ;  
Thou wilt not pain me, but in all the Greeks  
Wilt strike deep sorrow, if thou act not thus.  
For know, unless we gain his darts, in vain  
Wouldst thou essay to storm the Dardan towers.—  
Learn now the cause, why converse with the man  
To thee is sure and safe, though not to me.  
Thou sailed'st hither, bound by <sup>4</sup> oath to none—

---

<sup>3</sup> The contest concerning the arms of Achilles was solely between Ajax and Ulysses ; we have no account that Neoptolemus laid claim to them. As Philoctetes, however, had been absent during the whole affair, Ulysses was at liberty to substitute Neoptolemus in the room of Ajax, especially as his being the son of Achilles naturally justified his pretensions to the arms of his father. The fiction was therefore probable.—Francklin.

<sup>4</sup> The oath is related at large by Eurip. *Iph. at Aul.* All who engaged in this war under the obligations of this oath, that is—all who at first embarked with Agamemnon and Menelaus, were considered by Philoctetes as his enemies, in a conspiracy to expose him on that desert island. Neoptolemus was not of that number ; he therefore had not offended the deserted chief.—Potter.

By no severe necessity constrained—  
Nor with our former fleet—but nought of these  
By me can be denied. If with his bow  
Equipped, he should perceive me, I am lost—  
And by my presence should ensure thy ruin.  
This, then, should first be warily contrived,  
How thou mayst steal by fraudulent acts away  
Th' unconquerable arms. I know, my son,  
Thou com'st not of a race inured to speak  
In words like these, or forge insidious wiles—  
Yet think, for thee what joy to win the prize!  
Dare then,—hereafter will we live to justice.  
⁵ Now but for this brief day resign thy soul  
To me, for once suppress thy sense of shame,  
And ever after be the best of men.

*Neop.* If but to hear such words offends mine  
ear,

Son of Laertes, how I loathe the actions!  
I am not framed to play a traitor's part,  
And my brave sire, Fame rumours, spurned at fraud.  
I stand prepared to seize the man by force,  
But not by falsehood; on one foot sustained  
'Twere strange if he could match our manly might.

---

⁵ Da te hodie mihi.—Terence. *Adelph.* v. iii. 52.

And though, as thy confederate hither sent,  
Ill should I brook the false betrayer's name ;  
Yet know, O Prince, I deem it nobler far  
To fail with honour, than succeed by baseness.

*Ulys.* Son of a noble sire, I thus in youth  
‘ Was ever slow in speech, and prompt in deed.  
Now, taught by long experience, I have learnt  
That words, not deeds, direct th’ affairs of men.

*Neop.* What hast thou bid me but to utter falsehood ?

*Ulys.* By fraud I bid thee seize on Philoctetes.

*Neop.* And why by treachery rather than the  
means

Of fair persuasion ?

*Ulys.* Thou wilt ne’er persuade him,  
Nor capture him by force.

*Neop.* What matchless might  
Inspires such confidence ?

*Ulys.* Unerring darts  
Pointed with certain death.

---

‘ Similar is the character drawn by Sallust, of Jugurtha, in the brighter part of his life. *Plurimum facere, et minimum ipse de se loqui.* So Shakspeare of Troilus :—

Speaking in deeds, but deedless in his tongue.

Act iv. Scene 2.

*Neop.* And may none dare  
Ev'n to approach him ?

*Ulys.* 'Tis most perilous,  
Unless, as now I counsel, thou surprize him.

*Neop.* Dost thou not count it base to utter falsehood ?

*Ulys.* No ; not, at least, when falsehood leads to safety.

*Neop.* And with what front can one presume to speak  
In words like these ?

*Ulys.* When our advantage calls  
Such scruples should be silenced.

*Neop.* How can this  
Conduce to Ilion's downfall ?

*Ulys.* To these darts,  
And these alone, the Trojan towers can yield.

*Neop.* Am not I then predestined to subvert them ?

*Ulys.* Nor thou without these darts—nor they apart  
From thee.

*Neop.* If it be thus, they *must* be won.

*Ulys.* This done, a two-fold recompense awaits thee.

*Neop.* How ?—tell me this and I refuse no more.

*Ulys.* Thou wilt be styled at once most brave and wise.

*Neop.* Come on—despite of shame, I will perform it.

*Ulys.* Dost thou remember what I late advised?

*Neop.* In once assenting, I remember all.

*Ulys.* Thou then remain awaiting his return—

I must away, lest he detect my presence;

Then to the ship <sup>7</sup> do thou despatch the spy.

Here, too, if your return be long delayed,

The same will I send forth, in pilot's garb

Disguised, and in appearance so transformed,

That to the exile he may seem a stranger.

From whom, while dubious and perplexed his words,

Catch thou, my son, what best may suit our purpose.

<sup>7</sup> Musgrave proposes in this passage to substitute ἀπαστιλᾶς for ἀπαστιλῶ. Is it not more probable that ἀπαστιλᾶς is the true reading? Whence would arise the necessity of disguising the σκοπὸς, if Philoctetes had never seen him before; which would be the case according to the received reading? Doubtless, Neoptolemus would need some messenger to 'report progress.'

I, trusting this to thee, will seek the ship ;  
 May Hermes, God of wiles, be now our guide,  
 And <sup>8</sup> conquering Pallas, Queen of rampired towns,  
 Whose favouring presence evermore preserves me.

[*Exit* ULYSSES.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

*Ch.* My Lord, a stranger in a foreign land,  
 What to the wary exile should I speak,  
 Or what suppress? Instruct me thou.  
 For art by art is baffled still,  
 And judgement dwells in him who wields  
 The sceptre of Immortal Jove.  
 To thee, my son, from thy remotest line

---

<sup>8</sup> Under the name of Νίκη Αθήνα, Minerva was worshipped in her temple on the Acropolis of Athens.—(Eurip. Ion. 1550.) She was called Πολιάς, as being the foundress of that city ; though for what reason Ulysses should adopt such an appellation in addressing her, it may be difficult to discover. Her favour and protection of him are well known.

Descends such <sup>9</sup>sovereign sway. Then tell me now,  
How shall I aid thee here?

*Neop.* Now—for thou haply seek'st to trace  
The spot in this far region where he lies—  
Explore it boldly. When he comes—  
The terrible wanderer—from the cave emerge,  
And, ever watchful of my beck,  
Be near to aid me, as my need demands.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Ch.* Such was my care, O King, ere yet thou  
    spak'st,  
To keep for thine occasion heedful eye;—  
But tell me now in what abode  
He dwells, and where is wont to range;  
For this, in sooth, 'twere timely now to learn,  
Lest unawares he haply cross my path,  
And thus evade my notice.—Say, what spot,  
And what abode is his?—Where lies his path?—

---

<sup>9</sup> Κράτος ὀγύγιον—potestas ab atavis. From Ogyges, a very ancient King of Attica, or of Thebes, or, as some say, of the Gods, all ancient and venerable things were called ὀγύγια. Compare *Persæ* Æsch. 71, (37,) 961; *Eumen.* 1034; *Pindar Nem.* vi. 75. Blomfield.



Abroad, or in the cave ?

*Neop.* Thou sees't his drear abode, where the  
cleft rock.

A double entrance forms.

*Ch.* And whither roves the sad inhabitant ?

*Neop.* I doubt not, but in quest of food  
A path he <sup>10</sup> furrows, and is near us now ;  
Thus, Fame reports, his joyless life  
He still prolongs—with winged shafts  
Smiting the forest-prey, a hopeless wretch !  
And none hath ever come  
To heal his festering wound.

#### STROPHE II.

*Ch.* His doom my liveliest pity wakes,  
By mortal voice uncheered—  
Bereft of sympathetic eye ;  
But ever lonely, ever sad ;  
He strives with fell disease ;  
And oft in utmost need unaided pines,

---

<sup>10</sup> *ὀρυμέναι*.—There is a peculiar beauty in this expression, which it is difficult adequately to convey in a translation.—  
“ He trails his foot along so as to make a furrow in the ground.”

Can of the very same. How, O how  
 Endures the world through all  
 O mothering eyes of men  
 O human creatures of mankind  
 On whom fate surely crowns

ANTISTROPHES II.

He, who perchance in virtue mates  
 The noblest of his sires,  
 Bereft of all that Nature needs,  
 Pines sad and solitary here,  
 Mid beasts that range the wood,  
 And birds of painted wing. Oppressed  
 At once with pain and famine, he endures

---

Perhaps there does not occur in the whole compass of  
 ancient or modern poetry a more pathetic sentiment than that  
 exquisite passage of Euripides, Hipp. 800

Ω πόνοι τριφάρτις βρέτου.

O sorrows, ye nurses of mankind!

Musgrave follows Stanley in referring *στρίδις* to birds  
*Cum avibus vel feris*. The expression certainly corresponds  
 to the '*pectæ volucres*' of Virgil. It is, however, generally  
 understood to signify *dappled or speckled*. 'With dappled or  
 shaggy beasts.'

Immitigable woes ;

A sad inheritance !

While to his deep and piercing groans  
Loquacious Echo, murmuring from afar,  
Pours forth a wilder wail !

*Neop.* Nought here awakens my surprise.  
If right I deem, Heaven's wrath alone  
Heaped on his head these miseries,  
From Chryse's unrelenting wrath derived !  
Now that he pines unsolaced and alone,  
Is not without the will divine ;  
Lest on the fated towers of Troy  
He hurl th' unconquered weapons of the Gods,  
Ere yet the destined hour arrive  
When those proud towers must fall.

STROPHE III.

*Ch.* Hush ! hush, my son !

*Neop.* And what is this ?

---

<sup>3</sup> Sophocles appears here to follow that legend of Philoctetes, which relates, that having landed on the Isle of Chryse, near Lemnos, he was bitten by a serpent who guarded the shrine of Minerva, to whom he had been enjoined to sacrifice on behalf of the Greeks.

*Ch.* I seemed to hear a sound,  
A human sound, as though of one in pain.

*Neop.* And distant was the voice, or near?—  
It strikes—it strikes upon me ! 'tis the plaint  
Distinct of one who, in his path,  
With anguish lingers—nor does that deep groan  
Of pain escape me—though afar,  
Yet loudly now it sounds !

## ANTISTROPHE III.

*Ch.* Take yet, my son—

*Neop.* Inform me what?—

*Ch.* Fresh counsel—for the man  
Is not afar, but still yon cave within—  
\* Nor tuning there the rustic pipe  
As the blithe shepherd ; but on that rough path  
Haply he strikes his wounded foot,  
And shrieks for anguish—or descrying now  
Our ship's inhospitable port;—  
For dreadful are his cries !

---

\* Long ere our approaching heard within  
Noise, other than the sound of dance and song ;  
Torment, and loud lament, and furious rage.

Paradise Lost, viii. 242.

*Enter* PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

*Phi.* Strangers, ho !

Who, who are ye, to this bleak shore impelled  
By friendly port uncheered, or human home ?  
Say, from what region, or what lineage sprung,  
Should I pronounce you ? For the garb ye wear,  
Most welcome to mine eyes, proclaims you Greeks ;  
But I would hear your voices. Do not shrink  
To speak in friendship to so wild a form ;  
Pity a hapless, solitary man,  
Deserted, and in agony. O speak,  
If hither ye indeed are come as friends.  
Ah deign reply—nor justly could I seek  
This grace from you, nor ye from me, in vain.

*Neop.* First know then then, O stranger, we are  
Greeks,  
Since this it is thy soul desires to learn.

*Phi.* Thrice welcome accents ! Ah ! that I should  
hear  
Such greeting from such lips so long deferred !

What led thee hither, son?—what urgent need?—  
What impulse swift?—what most propitious gale?  
Tell me, that I may know thee, who thou art.

*Neop.* In sea-encircled Scyros was I born,  
And now am sailing homeward. For my name—  
'Tis Neoptolemus, Achilles' son.  
Thou know'st the whole.

*Phi.* Son of a sire most dear,  
And of a land beloved! thou youthful charge  
Of aged Lycomedes, with what aim  
Seek'st thou these dreary shores;—whence loosed  
thy bark?

*Neop.* From Ilion homeward now my course I  
steer.

*Phi.* What hast thou said? Thou wert not of  
the fleet  
When first to Troy our fatal course we sped?

*Neop.* Wert thou too sharer in that arduous toil?

*Phi.* And know'st thou not, my son, on whom  
thou look'st?

---

<sup>5</sup> Lycomedes, King of Scyros, was father of Deidamia, mother of Neoptolemus. Hence, though Phthia was his paternal inheritance, he was taught to consider Scyros as his home.

*Neop.* How should I know the man I never saw?

*Phi.* Hast thou not heard my name, nor yet the  
tale

Of those unequalled woes which wrought my ruin?

*Neop.* Know me in all unconscious of thy doom.

*Phi.* O plunged in miseries, and by Heaven accursed,

The rumour of whose wrongs hath never reached  
My native land, nor the loved realms of Greece;—  
But they, who basely thrust me into exile,  
Insult my woes in silence, while my wound  
For ever rankles, and my pangs increase.  
My child, the brave Achilles' martial son,  
I, I am he, whom haply thou hast heard,  
Styled Lord of Hercules' unconquered arms,  
The son of Pœas, wretched Philoctetes.—  
Me, the two Chiefs, and <sup>6</sup> Cephallene's lord,  
Have exiled thus, deserted, wasting still  
With dire disease, engendered by the wound,  
Tinged with the venom of the deadly snake;  
Thus tortured, O my son, they hither brought—

<sup>6</sup> The rule of Ulysses extended over the Island of Cephallene.—Homer, Il. N. 361, calls him Κεφαλλήνων ἀναξ, as in the text.

Here left me desolate ! what time they steered  
From sea-girt Chrysa to this cheerless isle :  
Soon as they saw me in th' o'er-arching rock  
Asleep, exhausted by the boisterous wave,  
The joyful sailors loosed ; but by my side,  
As for some wandering beggar, first they placed  
A few mean rags, and of the coarsest food  
A scanty dole—such one day be their own !  
⁷ Think, think, my son, from that brief broken  
    sleep  
How sad the waking, when I gazed around,  
And found my comrades fled ; what bitter tears  
I vainly shed—what sighs of anguish heaved,  
When I perceived the ships in which I came  
Departed all—and none of mortal race  
On that wild spot to aid me in my need,  
Or soothe my gnawing wound. I gazed around—  
Nought met mine eye but misery and despair !  
And, O my son, of these how large a store !  
Time lingered on, and day succeeded day,  
While I, sad tenant of this narrow cave,

---

⁷ This whole speech is beautifully paraphrased by Fenelon, who has, indeed, interwoven nearly the entire play into his *Telemachus*, book xv.



Must toil alone. The pittance nature craved  
 This bow supplied, whose certain aim brought  
 down

The fluttering doves ;—whate'er th' unerring shaft  
 Struck down, to seize the prey I slowly trailed  
 My wounded foot in agony along.

Nay more ! when thirst required the cooling  
 draught,

Or wintry frosts were stiffening on the ground,  
 I crept from out my cave, devising schemes  
 To fell me fuel ; yet no flame had I—

<sup>8</sup> But, striking flint on flint, I hardly wrung  
 The latent fire, <sup>9</sup> which cheers and warms me still.  
 For, with that fire, this closely-sheltered cave  
 Provides me all but freedom from disease.  
 Learn now, my son, what region thou hast reached.  
 This, unconstrained, no mariner draws nigh—  
 There is no haven here—the wave-beat crew  
 Find here no gain, no welcome refuge here ;

<sup>8</sup> Ut silicis venis abstrusum excuderet ignem.

Virg. Geo. i. 135.

<sup>9</sup> Erfurdt reads here, ὃ καὶ σώζοιμ' αἰεί—"Which may I ever preserve." Either sense is unexceptionable.

Nor would the prudent seek a shore like this.  
 Perchance one comes reluctant—for long life  
 Is fraught with much vicissitude to man ;  
 And such, when they arrive, my son ! in words  
 Express their pity, and some scant supply  
 Of food or raiment to my wants vouchsafe ;  
 But, when the boon I seek, all, all refuse  
 To bear me homeward. Thus I linger now,  
<sup>10</sup> The tenth sad year, in famine and despair,  
 Feeding this ever-wasting fell disease.  
 These trophies grace th' Atridæ, and this deed  
 Hath great Ulysses wrought, whom may the powers  
 Of high Olympus with such woes repay  
 As they have heaped on me !

*Ch.* I, son of Pœas,  
 Like mariners to this wild shore impelled,  
 Do pity thee.

*Neop.* Nay ; I too can attest  
 The tenor of thy words, as one who knows  
 The two Atridæ and Ulysses stamped  
 With basest villany.

<sup>10</sup> Pæne decem totis aluit Pœantius annis

Pestiferum tumido vulnus ab angue datum.

Ov. Trist. v. 2, 13.

*Phi.* And canst thou, too,  
Charge with injustice Atreus' cursed race,  
So that thy wrongs awake indignant hatred?

*Neop.* O could I so evince my hate in deeds,  
That Sparta and Mycenæ might attest,  
Our Scyros, too, the mother of bold heroes!

*Phi.* 'Tis bravely said; but whence that deadly  
wrath

With which thou com'st incensed against the kings?

*Neop.* O son of Pœas, though I scarce can  
brook

To speak them, I will tell thee all my wrongs—  
When ruthless Fate ordained Achilles' death—

*Phi.* Alas! ere thou speak further, tell me this;  
Is the brave son of Peleus now no more?

*Neop.* He died, but by no mortal hand,—the  
shaft

Of mighty Phœbus struck the fatal blow.

*Phi.* Most noble both, the slayer and the slain.

\* Such, at least, is the account of Homer, in the prophecy  
of the expiring Hector:—

Phœbus and Paris shall avenge my fate,  
And stretch thee here, before the Scæan gate.

I doubt, my son, or first to ask the tale  
Of thine own wrongs, or mourn thy father's fate.

*Neop.* I deem for thee, unhappy as thou art,  
It is enough to dwell on thine own griefs,  
And not to mourn another's.

*Phi.* Thou speak'st rightly—  
Resume thy story then, and tell me all,  
Wherein the Atridæ wrought thee desperate wrong.

*Neop.* The bold Ulysses, and the <sup>2</sup> Chief whose  
care

Cherished my father's youth, to Scyros came  
In a proud galley, <sup>3</sup> rich with varied store;  
Saying—if true or false I cannot judge—  
That, since my sire had perished, Heaven ordained  
No hand, save mine, to storm the stubborn Troy.  
Such was their tale, O stranger! nor long space  
Did I detain them, but embarked with speed,

<sup>2</sup> Phoenix.

<sup>3</sup> Ποικιλοστόλω.—Commentators differ as to the precise signification of this word. It may either denote well-equipped, or many-coloured. Musgrave's conjecture is more ingenious than judicious, who interprets it, 'manned with sailors of different nations.'

Urged more than all by fondness for the dead;  
To see him ere entombed, on whom, in life,  
It ne'er was mine to look. Next urged me, too,  
A worthy motive, e'en the thirst of fame,  
To go, and raze the lofty towers of Troy.  
When on my course the second morn arose,  
And to the loathed Sigæum with swift oars  
I steered, around me, soon as disembarked;  
Flocked the whole host with greeting—vowing all  
That in his son Achilles yet survived.  
Alas! he lay in death! I—doomed to woe—  
When o'er his corpse some natural tears had fallen,  
Sought the Atridæ, whom I deemed my friends,  
Claiming my father's arms, with all he had.  
Ye Gods! with what base insult they replied—  
“ Son of Achilles, all thy father's wealth  
“ Is granted to thy claim, all, save his arms.  
“ They grace another, e'en Laertes' son.”  
I, bathed in tears, indignantly rejoined,  
“ And have ye dared, injurious! to award  
“ My father's arms, ere mine assent obtained?”  
Ulysses, for he stood close by, replied:—  
“ Nay, youth, in justice gave they those bright  
arms

“<sup>4</sup> To me, who saved them and their master's  
corpse.”

I, fired to madness, answered with reproach,  
And called down every curse upon their heads;  
If he should dare bereave me of mine arms.  
He, thus reviled, though ever slow to wrath,  
Was galled by mine upbraidings, and replied :—

“ Thou wert not with us, but wert absent far  
“ When need required thy presence. For these  
arms—

“ Since to such height thy vain resentment boils,  
“ Ne'er, graced with them, shalt thou to Scyros  
sail.”

Thus hearing, and with shameless taunts reviled,  
I sail to Scyros—of mine own bereft  
By base Ulysses, vilest of the vile ;  
Though less with him than with the kings incensed.

<sup>4</sup> Me miserum ! quanto cogor meminisse dolore  
Temporis illius, quo Graium murus Achilles  
Procubuit ! nec me lachrymæ, luctusve, timorve  
Tardârunt, quin corpus humo sublime referrem.  
His humeris, his inquam, humeris ego corpus Achilles  
Et simul arma tuli.

Ovid. Metam. xiii. 280.

As on its ruler's will a city hangs,  
 So the confederate host—those of mankind  
 To honour lost, learn baseness from their lords.  
 My tale is told. Whoe'er the Atridæ loathes,  
 Dear may he be to Heaven as loved by me.

## STROPHE.

*Ch.* O mountain-loving Rhea, <sup>s</sup> nurse of all,  
 Mother of mightiest Jove,  
 Who dwell'st by rich Pactolus' golden stream,  
 There, holiest mother, there  
 Thee suppliant I implored,  
 When on my chief th' Atridæ wreaked  
 This most injurious wrong;  
 When they his sire's resplendent arms bestowed—

---

<sup>s</sup> Παμβῶτι Γᾶ.

Γᾶια θεὰ, μήτηρ μακάρων θεῶν τ' ἀνθρώπων  
 Πάντροφε, παιδύτεια.

Orph. Hymn.

Thus Virg. *Æn.* vi. 495.—*Terræ omniparentis alumnum.*

Pactolus, a river of Lydia with golden sands.—So “auro turbidus Hermus.” Peculiar honours were paid to Rhea, or Cybele, the Goddess here addressed, in Lydia and Phrygia. There is a remarkable propriety in the appeal to Rhea, as tutelary Goddess of the country wherein they then were.

(Thou ever blessed, whose proud car is drawn  
By slaughtering lions!)—when they gave  
The noblest trophy to Laertes' son!

*Phi.* Possessed, it seems, of cause for just  
offence,

To this lone isle, O strangers, have ye sailed;  
And can with me concur, that all these crimes  
From base Ulysses and th' Atridæ spring.  
That man, I know, to all injurious words  
All evil acts is prompt—by which he deems  
To compass nought of justice in the end.  
This wakes not my surprise;—my wonder is  
The elder Ajax bore to see this wrong.

*Neop.* He, stranger, was no more. While Ajax  
lived

I had not thus been plundered of my right.

*Phi.* What hast thou said?—Sleeps Ajax in the  
tomb?

*Neop.* He sees no more the welcome light of life.

*Phi.* Ah me unhappy! But for Tydeus' son,  
And the vile <sup>6</sup>bargain to Laertes sold

---

<sup>6</sup> We have already adverted to the supposition that Ulysses  
was the son of Sisyphus—



By Sisyphus—these have not perished too?  
They were at least unfit for longer life.

*Neop.* Not they, be well assured. They flourish  
still

The first in honour mid the Argive host.

*Phi.* But what—does he, the aged and the  
brave,

My much-loved friend—does Pylian Nestor live?  
He doubtless had by prudent counsels curbed  
Their guilty outrage.

*Neop.* Yes ; he lives indeed,  
But lives in sorrow, since <sup>7</sup>Antilochus,  
His sole surviving son, in combat fell.

The Sisyphian seed,  
By fraud and theft asserts his father's breed.

*Ov. Metam. xiii.*

<sup>7</sup> Antilochus was slain by Memnon, according to Homer.

On the Phrygian plain  
Extended pale, by swarthy Memnon slain.

*Odyss. iv.*

The word *μόρος* does not signify that Antilochus was the only son of Nestor, since we read of Pisistratus in the *Odyssey*, but the only surviving son of the two who had accompanied him to Troy.

*Phi.* Ah me ! how mournful thy report of two,  
Of whom such tale I least desired to hear :

Ah ! whither, whither must I look, since these  
Have perished, and the vile Ulysses lives,  
Who hath so well deserved their doom of death ?

*Neop.* A skilful combatant is he—but fraud  
Though skilful, Philoctetes, sometimes fails.

*Phi.* Come, by the Gods, inform me where was he,  
Patroclus, thy brave father's dearest friend ?

*Neop.* He too had fall'n. But I will tell thee all  
In one brief word—War never sweeps away  
The vile and worthless, but destroys the good.

*Phi.* I do assent, and will for proof inquire  
Of a most worthless and detested wretch,  
Crafty and shrewd of tongue—how fares he now ?

*Neop.* Of other than Ulysses speak'st thou thus ?

*Phi.* I mean not him—there was a babbling fool  
Whom none could silence—<sup>s</sup> named Thersites—he,  
This worthy—know'st thou if he live and prosper ?

*Neop.* I never saw him—but have heard he lives.

*Phi.* Aye ; fit he should—for nothing vile is lost,  
Such the Gods visit with peculiar care—

<sup>s</sup> For a description of Thersites, see Pope's *Il.* ii. 265.

The wily and the traitorous they rejoice  
To rescue from the tomb, but ever send  
To that drear home the righteous and the good.  
How shall I judge, or how extol the Gods,  
Proved, by the actions I would praise, unjust?

*Neop.* Son of Cætæan Pœas—henceforth I,  
Beholding from afar the Trojan towers  
And the Atridæ, will of both beware.  
Where o'er the better still the worse prevails,  
And honour fades, and infamy is crowned,  
Such men I never, never will revere.  
Henceforth for me shall Scyros' rocky isle  
Suffice—contented with my native home.  
Now to my ship I go. Thou, son of Pœas,  
Farewell, and be thou happier! May the Gods  
Heal, as thy soul desires, this sad disease—  
We now depart, and soon as Heaven bestows  
A favouring breeze, will steer our homeward course.

*Phi.* And will ye go, my son?

*Neop.* Time calls us now  
To watch beside the ship, not thus remote.

*Phi.* Now by a father's, by a mother's love,  
My son! by all thy home contains most dear,  
I come imploring—leave me not thus lone,  
Forsaken in the woes thine eyes behold,

Which thou hast heard for ever I endure ;  
 'Increase thy freight by me. I know, alas,  
 Such load is most unwelcome—most abhorred,  
 Yet, yet, endure it. To the nobly-born  
 Is baseness hateful—honour is their pride.  
 Foul shame it were on thee to leave me thus—  
 But, O my son, what glory wouldst thou gain,  
 Should I, yet living, reach th' Ætæan realms.  
 Yield—'tis not e'en the evil of a day.  
 Assent—embark me—cast me where thou wilt—  
 The hold, the prow, the stern—I reck not where—  
 Where'er thy comrades I may least offend.  
 Assent, my son ! By Jove, the suppliant's aid,  
 O yield—thus prostrate at thy knees I fall  
 Though most infirm and wretched. Leave me not  
 On this lone strand, remote from human care ;—  
 Oh ! save and bear me to thy friendly home,  
 Or to Chalcodon's<sup>10</sup> loved Eubœan towers—

<sup>9</sup> 'Ε, παρίγω ὃ μὲν, — Πάρεργον, “ qui est præter susceptum  
 “ opus ; ad susceptum opus additus.” Evidently an addition  
 to thy freight. By some, however, interpreted, “ an over-  
 “ plus of toil.”

<sup>10</sup> Chalcodon, an ancient King of Eubœa. Vide Eurip.

Not long my passage thence to Œta's plains,  
 The rocky heights of Trachis, and the flood  
 Of clear Spercheius, where to my loved sire  
 Thou mayst present me, if, indeed, the grave  
 Have not withdrawn him from my gaze for ever.  
 Ah! oft to him, by those who voyaged here,  
 Have I despatched my warm and earnest prayer,  
 That, hither sending, he would bear me home.  
 Or he is dead, or of the charge I gave  
 Full lightly have they recked—the common lot  
 Of wretchedness—and homeward sped their course.  
 Now since to thee my own sad messenger  
 I come—O save me, pity my despair,  
 Viewing what miseries man must ever dread,  
 His doom, how sealed in darkness—prosperous now,  
 Now adverse. When unclouded by dismay  
 Thy skies are bright, expect a sad reverse;  
 When man is blessed, let him well observe  
 His life, lest, unawares, he sink to ruin.

## ANTISTROPHE.

*Ch.* Have mercy, King! for his sad tale is told

---

**Ion.** II. iv. 464. Τὰ σταθμὰ are properly the anchorage for ships.

Of countless woes and keen—  
 Such never, never, may my friends endure !  
 But if, O King, thou hat'st  
 The Brother-Chiefs severe,  
 Their baseness would I now convert  
 To this poor exile's gain ;  
 And since he long hath lingered joyless here,  
 In my good galley would I bear him hence,  
 To his loved home—by such a deed  
 Evading too the ' vengeful wrath of Heaven.

*Neop.* Beware ! lest thou this grace too promptly  
 yield,

And, when thou shar'st the evil of his pangs,  
 Then with these words thy feelings ill accord.

<sup>1</sup> Θεῶν νέμεισιν. Νέμεις, the just and righteous anger of the Gods.

Si genus humanum et mortalia temnitis arma,  
 At sperate Deos memores fandi atque nefandi.

Virg. *Æn.* i. 508.

There was also the φθόρος τῶν θεῶν, the causeless or capricious anger of the Gods, a very striking instance of which occurs, line 776, τὸν φθόρον δὲ πρόσχυρον. Compare *Alcest*, 1154, Monk's edit. in which there is a lucid and interesting note on the subject.

*Cho.* Distrust me not—it cannot, shall not be  
That thou should'st charge me with inconstant  
soul.

*Neop.* I hold it most unseemly to appear  
Less prompt than thou to grant this timely aid.  
Sail we, if such thy purpose—let him come  
With speed—our ship shall bear him—for repulsed  
He shall not be. May Heaven but grant us hence  
A prosperous voyage to the land we seek.

*Phi.* O day most welcome! dearest of mankind!  
Loved mariners—how, how shall I requite  
The mighty favour ye have promptly shown?—  
Hence let us haste, my son, saluting first  
\*My dark and drear abode, that thou may'st learn  
How scanty I have lived—how firmly borne!  
Alas! I deem, on agonies like these  
None, save myself, could even brook to gaze—  
But stern necessity hath taught me patience.

*Ch.* Hist! let us learn what news—two men  
approach,

\* "Αοικον ἰσόικιστον. Literally, my houseless abode. This is a striking instance of the fervent and habitual piety of the ancients. Philoctetes would not leave even this miserable abode, till he had adored the tutelary Gods.

One from thy bark, and one in foreign garb  
Attired—these question—enter then the cave.

*Enter* MERCHANT.

*Mer.* Son of Achilles—of this mariner,  
Who, with two others, near thy ship kept guard,  
I asked where I might find thee, since I chanced  
To light upon thee thus—not by design,  
But driv'n by fortune to the self-same strand.  
Steering my bark, as master, light of freight,  
From Ilion homeward to the vine-clad isle  
'Of Peparethus ;—when I learnt the crew,  
Who now are sheltering in the road, were thine ;—  
I could not sail in silence, till I told  
Tidings which yet thou know'st not—and should'st  
know.

<sup>3</sup> Peparethus is a small island in the Ægean sea, formerly noted for producing abundance of olives and wine.

Nitidæque ferax Peparethus olivæ.

Ov. Met. vii. 470.

'Οὐ πολλῷ στόλῳ may possibly mean with no numerous fleet, viz. with a single ship.



Perchance thou'rt yet unconscious what imports  
Thy welfare—what the counsels of the Greeks  
To thee referring—counsels now no more,  
But deeds, commenced in act, if not fulfilled.

*Neop.* Stranger, the service of thy generous zeal,  
Unless I am most base, shall long be owned.  
But now the purport of thy tidings tell,  
What recent plot of Greece 'gainst me thou bearest.

*Mer.* Some have already sailed with naval force  
Charged to pursue thee—Phoenix, hoar with age,  
And Theseus' martial sons.

*Neop.* To bear me back  
By violence or persuasion?

*Mer.* This I know not—

I came but to inform thee what I heard.

*Neop.* Doth Phoenix, then, and do his comrades  
dare

This arduous deed to please the sons of Atreus?

*Mer.* Know, 'tis already done—there is no pause,  
Nor lingering here.

*Neop.* Why did Ulysses then  
Withhold his ready service—was he checked  
By salutary fear?

*Mer.* He, with the son

Of Tydeus on like enterprize was bound,

When from the port I weighed.

*Neop.* For whom, save me,  
Thus did Ulysses sail?

*Mer.* Aye, there was one—but first  
Inform me who is this—and what thou say'st  
Speak in low voice.

*Neop.* This man, O stranger, is  
The noble Philoctetes.

*Mer.* Say no more,  
But hoist thy sail, and speed thee from the land.

*Phi.* What doth he tell, my son? with words  
obscure

<sup>4</sup> Why seeks this mariner to betray my hopes?

*Neop.* I know not yet—but let him frankly speak  
Alike to thee, and me, and these beside us.

*Mer.* Son of Achilles, that to thee I breathe  
Forbidden words, relate not to the host,  
From whom, for aid a lowly man may lend,  
I bear an ample largess.

*Neop.* I abhor  
The sons of Atreus—this man is my friend,  
My dearest friend, in that he hates them too.

---

<sup>4</sup> Literally, why does he buy and sell me in his words?

But since thou cam'st in friendship, of the tale  
Which thou hast heard, I pray thee nought conceal.

*Mer.* Look to thine actions.

*Neop.* I long since have looked.

*Mer.* The blame be wholly thine.

*Neop.* It shall—but speak.

*Mer.* I will. The two bold chiefs, e'en as thou  
hear'st,

The son of Tydeus and Ulysses sage,  
Bound by an oath have sailed, to bring this man  
A captive, by persuasion, or by force.  
This all the Greeks in open day have heard  
Ulysses vaunt—for greater trust was his  
To win his purpose, than his comrade owned.

*Neop.* And for what cause, such lengthened  
space elapsed,

Would the Atridæ now regard the wretch  
Whom for long years to exile they consigned?  
What need invades them now? What heavenly  
might,

What righteous wrath avenging impious deeds?

*Mer.* I will recount the whole, since haply thou  
Art uninformed—There was a certain Seer,  
Of race illustrious, Priam's royal son,  
And Helenus his name, whom he that hears

From every tongue deserved and keen reproach,  
The base Ulysses, as he prowled alone  
By night, took captive, and his prisoner brought  
Before th' assembled Greeks, a noble prey,  
Who then with other mysteries this revealed :  
Ne'er should they raze the lofty citadel  
Of Troy so long besieged, till they should lure,  
By smooth persuasion from the rocky isle  
Where now he dwells, this warrior here before thee.  
When thus Ulysses heard the seer proclaim,  
He promptly pledged his faith that he would seek  
This man, and bring him to the Grecian host,  
And, as he deemed, with unreluctant mind ;  
If not, by violence.—Should he fail in this,  
His head should pay the forfeit of his failure.  
Thou hast heard all, my son ! I warn thee now  
To speed thy flight, with all who share thy love.

*Phi.* Wretch that I am ! This villain, most  
accursed,

Hath he then sworn to lure me back to Greece?

<sup>s</sup> As soon shall he persuade me, when no more,

---

<sup>s</sup> Sisyphus, on the approach of death, charged his wife, Merope, one of the Atlantides, to leave his body unburied.

Like his false father, to return to earth.

*Mer.* Of this I nothing know, but to my ship  
Depart. The Gods aright direct you both!

[*Exit* MERCHANT.]

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

*Phi.* Is it not galling that Laertes' son  
Should hope by wily blandishments again  
To lure me hence, and show me to the Greeks?  
O never! Rather would I lend mine ear  
To the fell viper, which hath maimed me thus.—  
But all things he will say, and all things dare,  
And now I know too surely he will come.  
But let us hence—that soon the wide, wide sea  
May foam 'twixt us and loathed Ulysses' bark.  
Come—let us hence—for timely speed full oft,

---

Arriving in Pluto's kingdom, he requested and received permission to return, in order to punish this seeming impiety of his wife, on condition of revisiting hell without delay. No sooner, however, was he out of the infernal regions, than he violated his oath, but was afterwards brought back by Mars, and punished.

The toil accomplished, yields a glad repose.

*Neop.* Soon as the gale, fresh blowing towards  
the prow,

<sup>6</sup>Subsides, we'll hence—the wind is adverse now.

*Phi.* The winds are ever fair to him who flies  
From wretchedness.

*Neop.* Fear not—this breeze to them  
Is adverse also.

*Phi.* No adverse winds  
Deter the pirate from his purposed course,  
On plunder bent, and fired by lawless prey.

*Neop.* Well, since thou wilt, we sail, when from  
within  
Thou hast provided all thy need demands,  
Or wishes prompt.

*Phi.* One thing my need demands,  
Though scant my store.

*Neop.* What canst thou need, beyond  
Our bark to furnish?

*Phi.* I possess a herb  
With which the deadly wound I oft assuage,

<sup>6</sup> The Scholiast here reads *αγῆ* for *αῖῆ*. If this be the true reading, it must be quasi *αἰγῆ*, from *ἀγρίμυς*, frango.

And mitigate the anguish.

*Neop.* Bring it then—

Would'st thou take aught beside?

*Phi.* I must beware,

Lest one of these dread arrows should escape,

For mortal hands to find.

*Neop.* Is this, which now

Thou bear'st, the far-famed bow?

*Phi.* Yes; aught besides

Were stranger to this hand.

*Neop.* And may I dare

To bring it closer to my lips—to hold—

And 'kiss the sacred relic as divine?

*Phi.* To thee, my son, both this, and aught beside  
Of mine that may delight thee, shall be done.

*Neop.* Such is indeed my wish, though but  
indulged

<sup>7</sup> προσύσαι. This word here signifies to kiss, though in v. 766, (Erfurdt,) it denotes to appease or mitigate by adoration, the anger of the Gods. Among the ancients, (as well as the modern Orientals,) a kiss was considered the greatest mark of veneration and respect.

Et dare sacratis oscula liminibus.

Tib. Eleg. i. v. 44.

Compare also Cic. in Ver. Lib. iv. 43. Virg. Æn. ii. 490.

With this control—if it be just—I wish ;  
If not, pass thou my wish unheeded by.

*Phi.* Thy words are pious, son!—'tis just for thee—  
Thee, who alone hast giv'n me to behold  
The sun's broad light, my own Ætean land,  
My aged father, and my much-loved friends ;  
And bidst me rise triumphant o'er my foes.  
Doubt not—'tis freely thine to touch the bow ;  
And when thou hast restored it, boast that thou  
Alone of men hast grasped the sacred arms,  
The guerdon of thy virtue. I myself  
By constant friendship won th' immortal gift—  
It will not grieve me then that thou, my friend,  
Should'st view and bear it. He who knows to pay  
A due return for benefits received  
Is a true friend, the dearest earthly good.

*Neop.* Now should'st thou go within.

*Phi.* Aye—and within  
Will lead thee too, for this my sad disease  
Longs to receive thee as its firm support.

[*Exeunt* NEOPTOLEMUS and PHILOCTETES.]



*Chorus.*

## STROPHE I.

Yes ! I have heard in tale, yet ne'er have seen,  
 What hopeless anguish he was doomed to feel,  
 Who sought the couch of Jove's Imperial Queen,  
 Chained by the Thunderer on the <sup>8</sup>whirling wheel;—  
 But none have known, none viewed, of all man-  
                   kind,  
 Like this sad exile, to despair consigned,  
 Who, though for guilt, for fraud unblamed;  
 For justice 'mid the righteous famed,  
 In shame and sorrow thus hath pined !  
 Ah ! much I marvel how he bore  
 To list the wild waves' sullen roar ;  
 The only sound of life—yet still  
 Lived on to keener pangs and deadlier ill :—

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Sole tenant of the shore—scarce faltering on

---

<sup>8</sup> "Αστύνα. Originally, the fillet used by women to bind up their hair ; and hence taken, from its round form, to signify a wheel. Musgrave proposes, however, to read ἄστύνα.

With powerless step—no human succour near;  
 'No partner of his woe to heed the groan  
 Wrung from his bosom by that pang severe;  
 None, when his wound poured forth th' envenomed  
     flood

To stanch with soothing herbs the feverish blood,  
 Herbs culled from earth's maternal breast,  
 Potent to win a transient rest!—  
 For when to sleep awhile subdued  
 His pangs relax—as, yet untried  
 To wander from its mother's side,  
 Alone the infant seeks to stray;—  
 He crawls with faltering foot his weary way.

## STROPHE II.

No fruits for him provides the sacred soil,  
 No golden grain requites his patient toil,  
 He can but aim the winged shafts on high  
 From that far-sounding bow,  
 And for his hunger win a scant supply.

' *Kakoyítov*. Not a bad neighbour, but a neighbour to evil. It must, however, be confessed, that the word does occasionally bear the former sense. *Kakoyítovis ἔχθροι*.—*Callim.*

Ah joyless soul! ten lingering years succeed,  
 And still, uncheered by wine's enlivening glow,  
 He seeks the stagnant waters, sad and slow,  
 Where chance his path may lead!

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Again for him shall joy resplendent shine,  
 From woe to greatness raised—of royal line  
 A youth encountering now, who o'er the flood,  
 In galley swift of flight,—  
 The long, long months fulfilled—to his abode  
 Shall bear the exile, where the Melian choir  
 Dwell by Spercheius—where from Cæta's height  
 The brazen shielded chief to realms of light  
 †<sup>o</sup>Rose in celestial fire.

*Neop.* Crawl forth, if such thy pleasure.—Where-  
 fore thus

Silent without a cause, and sudden struck  
 As if with mute amazement?

*Phi.* Woe is me!

*Neop.* What ails thee?

*Phi.* 'Tis a trifle. Come, my son!

†<sup>o</sup> The apotheosis of Hercules, which took place on Mount Cæta, is here adverted to.

*Neop.* Arise fresh sufferings from thy present plague?

*Phi.* No, no, in sooth; I tread more lightly now—

Alas! ye Gods!

*Neop.* Why thus with bitter groans  
Invoke the Gods?

*Phi.* That they be present now,  
Our guardians and preservers. Ha! that pang—

*Neop.* What anguish wrings thee—wilt thou not confess?—

Still silent? Some fresh ill, it seems, hath seized thee!

*Phi.* I die, my son! no longer can I quell  
This maddening pain. Ha! there! again it thrills,  
Thrills to my inmost soul. Wretch that I am!  
My son, my son, I perish, I am racked—

*(Repeated and violent groans.)*

Hast thou a sword, my son? For Heaven's dear sake,

With friendly hand strike off this wretched foot;  
Quick—smite it off—and spare not life itself.

<sup>1</sup> Erfurdt reads this passage *μὴ φείσῃ βίας*, Spare not force. The reading we have adopted appears preferable, as it is a

*Neop.* What strange and sudden pang hath seized thee now,  
That thus thou utterest wild and bitter cries?

*Phi.* Know'st thou, my son?—

*Neop.* What is it?

*Phi.* Know'st thou, son?—

*Neop.* Know what?

*Phi.* Dost thou not know? how know'st thou not?—

<sup>a</sup> Woe! woe is me!

*Neop.* The burden of thy pangs  
Is heavy on thee now!

more appropriate conclusion to the impassioned ravings of the unhappy sufferer.

<sup>a</sup> “ Unless all the commentators be mistaken,” says the Oxford Prose Translator, “ these expressions, and the *εἰλεῖλε* of Æschylus, are positive nonsense.” We should rather be inclined to suppose that *all* the commentators were mistaken, than that either Sophocles or Æschylus could write positive nonsense. When we consider the copiousness of the Greek language, we surely need not wonder that it cannot be adequately rendered by the paucity of our own. Had our *barbarian* Shakspeare written in Greek, he would, doubtless, have surpassed Æschylus and Sophocles as far as he excels every modern dramatic poet, though even in this case it would not be a necessary consequence that he should altogether have discarded interjections.

*Phi.* Heavy indeed !

No words can paint it—yet—O pity me!

*Neop.* What can I do to aid thee?

*Phi.* Do not thou

In wild amaze betray me to my foes.

The pangs revive by starts—perchance, ere long,

They will have run their course, and cease. Ah me!

*Neop.* Unhappy man! thine anguish wakes my  
pity—

Proved most unhappy in thy countless ills.

Shall I uphold thee with sustaining hand?

*Phi.* No, no ; not thus—but take these hallow-  
ed arms,

As thou didst seek to hold them, till the pangs

That rend me now, exhausted, shall subside;

Take thou, and guard them well. Slumber is wont

To seize and soothe me when the pangs are o'er;

Nor can I rest till then—but I must lie

In undisturbed repose. And if, meantime,

My foes approach, I charge thee by the Gods,

Nor by assent, nor force, nor any means,

To yield these arms to them, lest thou consign

Both me, thy suppliant, and thyself to death.

*Neop.* Be calm, and trust my caution—to no hand,  
Save to mine own and thine, shall they be given.

Yield them with favouring omens to my care.

*Phi.* Receive them, O my son. But pay thy  
vows

To Envy, lest they prove the source of woe,  
As they have been to me and were to him  
Their first and great possessor.

*Neop.* Grant, ye Gods!

Such may my fortune be—and may our course  
Be swift and prosperous, where disposing Heaven  
Wills in its justice, and my bark is bound.

*Phi.* O but, I fear, thy prayers are breathed in  
vain.

Alas, my son!

Once more th' ensanguined stream from this deep  
wound

Is oozing fresh, and keener pangs impend.

Ah me! Ah me!

Why, cursed foot, why dost thou thus torment me?

Ah! it steals on—

It comes—it comes—'tis here—Wretch that I am!

Thou seest my sad estate. Ah! fly me not!

O that like pangs might rend thy guilty breast,  
Stranger of Cephallene.—Ah! I groan

Again—and yet again.—O brother chiefs

O Agamemnon, Menelaus, that ye

Could feel the anguish I have felt so long !  
 Death—death—so oft, so long invoked in vain,  
 Day after day, wilt thou not come at last?  
 My son, my noble son, afford thine aid.  
 Ah burn me, burn me, in the flames that <sup>3</sup> curl  
 Around us, generous youth ! Such task as I  
 For these good arms, which now thou keep'st, dis-  
     charged  
 To Jove's great son, do thou the same for me.  
 What say'st thou, son ?  
 What say'st thou ? wherefore mute ? alas, where art  
     thou ?

*Neop.* I mourn in pity to behold thy woes.

*Phi.* Ah ! be not thou dejected—with such pangs  
 The fit comes on, and is as quickly past.  
 But, I conjure thee, leave me not alone.

*Neop.* Cheer thee ! we will remain.

*Phi.* And wilt thou stay ?

*Neop.* Account it certain.

*Phi.* By an oath to bind thee,

<sup>3</sup> We do not read here ἀνακαλεμένω, as in Erfurdt's edition, but, according to Brunck, ἀνακυκλεμένω. The isle of Lemnos appears to have emitted volcanic fires, which is probably the reason why it was consecrated to Vulcan.



I should disdain, my son !

*Neop.* Justice, at least,  
Would now forbid me to depart without thee.

*Phi.* Pledge me thy hand.

*Neop.* I do, I will remain.

*Phi.* Now thither—thither—

*Neop.* Whither dost thou mean.

*Phi.* Upwards—

*Neop.* Thou rav'st again—why dost thou gaze  
Thus wildly on the azure vault of heaven ?

*Phi.* Release, release me !

*Neop.* Whither thus release thee—

*Phi.* Release me now.

*Neop.* I will not yet release thee.

*Phi.* Thou wilt destroy me, if thou touch me  
still.

*Neop.* Lo, now I leave thee to thyself, and what  
Is yet thy purpose ?

*Phi.* Take, O take me, Earth,  
Expiring to thy bosom, for this plague  
Will leave me strength to stand upright no more.

*Neop.* Sleep, it should seem, ere long will soothe  
his woes.

His powerless head already droops to earth ;  
And his whole frame a copious sweat bedews.

Lo! in his foot: one black and ruptured vein  
 Emits the gore. Now leave we him, O friends,  
 That sleep may soothe him in a bland repose!

## STROPHE.

*Ch.* <sup>4</sup>Sleep, gentle sleep, in pain, in griefs un-  
 taught,  
 Come with thy softest gales,—  
 O peace-imparting Power!  
 Veil from his eyes the 'broad red glare of day;  
 Come, healing God, O come!—  
 Look well, my son, or where thou pause,  
 Or whither move—and when occasion asks  
 My willing aid! The gales invite,  
 And why delay the deed?  
 To seize aright th' important hour  
 Avails to prompt success

---

<sup>4</sup> This passage, beautiful as it is, is excelled by those exquisite lines of Euripides:

ὦ φίλον ὕπνῃ θάλπητρον, ἐπίκυρον νόσῳ  
 ὦς ἡδὺ μοι προσῆλθεις ἐν δέοντί γε.  
 ὦ πότνια λήθη τῶν κακῶν, ὡς εἴ, σοφὴ,  
 Καὶ τοῖσι δυστυχῶσι εὐκταία θεός.

Eurip. Orest. 205. (Porson's edit.)

<sup>5</sup> Some, including Erfurdt, read here ἀχλύ for αἰγλαν, which would altogether invert the sense of the passage—  
 “Stretch over his eyes the mist of darkness.”

Beyond sage counsel, or superior might.

*Neop.* Nay, nought he hears. I know, if he remain,

In vain we seize his arms and sail to Troy;  
To him this crown belongs—we bear him hence  
By Heaven's command—and 'tis a base reproach  
To vaunt with falsehood promise unredeemed.

ANTISTROPHE.

*Ch.* For this, my son, for this let Heaven provide—

But when again thou speak'st,  
In low and whispered tone  
Reply, my son! the slumber of disease  
Is light and watchful still,—  
But thou, far as thou may'st, explore  
For me the purpose which is labouring now  
Deep in thy breast concealed. Thou know'st  
The man of whom I speak;  
And, if thy thought with his accord,  
'Tis wisdom's part to trace  
The depth of counsels that perplex the simple.

---

<sup>6</sup> Some understand these words as referring to Ulysses, others, to Philoctetes. Brunck, whom we have followed, inclines to the former opinion.

The gale, the gale is ours—in slumber, still  
 As midnight rest, he lies. Be sleep, of fear  
<sup>7</sup>Devoid, our aid, enchaining hand, foot, heart.  
 He looks as of the dead. Thy bidding speak—  
<sup>8</sup>This task, O son, my prudence can perform;  
 Toil most avails, when most of fear devoid.

*Neop.* Peace—peace—I charge thee, from such  
 thoughts refrain ;

For lo,—his eyelids move—he lifts his head.

*Phi.* O light to sleep succeeding! faithful care  
 Of these kind strangers far beyond my hope!  
 I never deemed, my son, that thou wouldst bear  
 With constant pity mine unrivalled ills,  
 And still thy presence and thine aid bestow.  
 Such toil those noble and right worthy chiefs,  
 Th' Atridæ, never had thus lightly brooked;  
 But thou, a gallant father's generous son,  
 Dear youth! with stedfast soul hast promptly borne  
 My groans—and fetid odours of my wound.

<sup>7</sup> We concur with Reiske and Musgrave in reading *ἀδὴς* for *αλιῆς*.

<sup>8</sup> This is a very perplexed passage: it appears to convey a hint of the ease with which Philoctetes might be seized when asleep. The obscurity is evidently designed.

Now, since this genial sleep has kindly lent  
Brief respite from my sufferings, O my son,  
Raise me from earth, and fix me on the ground,  
That, when the anguish ceases, we may go  
To our good ship—nor yet delay our course.

*Neop.* Much I rejoice to see, beyond my hopes,  
Thine eye to light, thy frame from pain restored.  
Thy pangs regarding, and that death-like rest,  
I deemed, in sooth, thy latest hour was nigh.  
Raise now thyself—or, if it please thee more,  
These will support thee, nor refuse the toil,  
So thou assent, and I command their service.

*Phi.* I thank thee, son, and raise me as thou  
say'st—

But leave thy crew, lest, ere our need demands,  
The fetid odours reach them ;—'tis enough  
To bear such loathsome comrade in their bark.

*Neop.* This as thou wilt, but rise, and lean on me.

*Phi.* Courage! I will, as is my wont, arise.

*Neop.* Ye Gods! I waver—what should next be  
done?

*Phi.* My son, what mean'st thou? whither tends  
thy speech?

*Neop.* I know not whither I should turn my words,  
Perplexed and dubious!

*Phi.* Dost thou speak of doubt?

Nay, talk not thus, my son.

*Neop.* Yet even now

In such am I involved!

*Phi.* Hath then the ill

Of my disease impelled thee to withhold

The passage promised late?

*Neop.* All must be ill

When man the bias of his soul forsakes,

And does a deed unseemly.

*Phi.* But I know

Nought of thy sire unworthy wilt thou do

In granting aid to one not wholly worthless.

*Neop.* I shall appear a villain—hence my grief.

*Phi.* 'Tis not thy deeds, thy words excite my  
terror.

*Neop.* Great Jove direct me! Shall I twice be  
proved

A villain, first concealing sacred truth—

Then uttering words of falsehood?

*Phi.* Or my fears

Deceive me, or this man designs to sail

And leave me here, abandoned and betrayed.

*Neop.* I will not leave thee—'tis my liveliest fear  
Lest to thy sorrow I should bear thee hence.

*Phi.* What dost thou mean, my son? Thy words perplex me.

*Neop.* Nought will I hide. Thou must away to Troy,

To the Atridæ and the host of Greece.

*Phi.* Ah me! what say'st thou?

*Neop.* Till thou hear'st, be calm.

*Phi.* What must I hear; what is thy purpose now?

*Neop.* First from thine ills to rescue thee—then sail

To raze with thee the haughty towers of Troy.

*Phi.* Is this indeed thy sure and settled aim?

*Neop.* Necessity constrains me to the deed.

Hear then in calmness, and thy wrath restrain.

*Phi.* Ah! I am lost—betrayed. What hast thou done?

O stranger—quickly give me back my arms.

*Neop.* It cannot be. Justice and interest both constrain obedience to superior power.

*Phi.* 'Thou blasting flame! Thou horror of my soul!

---

' The Scholiast, with his usual felicity of conjecture, interprets this as an execrable pun on the name of Pyrrhus, in which he has been followed by Brumoy, who paraphrases it,

Thou loathed inventor of atrocious fraud ;  
 What hast thou done—how wronged my easy  
     faith ?

Doth it not shame thee to behold me thus,  
 A suitor and a suppliant, wretch, to thee ?  
 Stealing my bow, of life thou hast bereft me.  
 Restore, I pray thee, O my son, restore it !  
 By thine ancestral Gods, take not my life !  
 Wretch that I am ! he deigns not e'en reply,  
 But still looks backward, as resolved to spurn me.  
<sup>10</sup> Ye ports, ye beetling crags, ye haunts obscure  
 Of mountain-beasts, ye wild and broken rocks,  
 To you I mourn, for I have none beside !  
 To you, who oft have heard me, tell the wrongs,  
 The cruel deeds Achilles' son hath wrought !  
 Pledged to convey me home, he sails to Troy—  
 Plighting his hand in faith—he meanly steals  
 My bow, the sacred arms of Jove's great son ;

---

“ O rage digne de ton nom.” Both the Scholiast and his imitator appear to have forgotten, that the son of Achilles was known only to Philoctetes by the name of Neoptolemus.

<sup>10</sup> Daphni, tuum Pœnos etiam ingemuisse leones,  
 Interitum, montesque feri sylvæque loquuntur.

Virg. Ec. v. 27.



And would display them to the Grecian host.  
By force he takes me, as some vigorous chief,  
Nor knows his triumph is achieved o'er one  
Long helpless as the dead—a shadowy cloud—  
An empty phantom. In my hour of might  
He ne'er had seized me thus, since, in my ills,  
He but by fraud entrapped me. I am now  
Deceived to my despair. What shall I do?  
Ah! yet restore them, be again thyself.  
What dost thou say?—Yet silent?—Then I perish.  
Thou double portal of the rock, again,  
I enter thee, of arms, of life, deprived;—  
But I must pine forsaken in the cave;  
Nor winged bird, nor mountain-ranging beast,  
Shall these good darts bring down. I yield in  
death

To those a banquet, who supplied mine own;  
They whom I once pursued shall hunt me now;  
While with my blood their slaughter I atone,  
Betrayed by one who seemed the soul of honour.  
I will not curse thee, ere I learn, if yet  
Thou wilt relent—if not, all evil blast thee!

*Ch.* What do we, King! we wait but thy com-  
mand,

To sail—or yield to this poor exile's prayer?

*Neop.* On me, indeed, compassion strongly fell  
Long since, when first his piteous tale I heard.

*Phi.* Have mercy on me, by the Gods, my son!  
Shame not thyself in thus beguiling me.

*Neop.* What shall I do?—Oh had I never left  
My native Scyros! this unworthy deed  
Is hateful to me.

*Phi.* No; thou art not base,  
Though lessons of dishonour hast thou learnt  
From evil men. To others leaving now  
Such arts, sail hence, restoring first mine arms.

*Neop.* What, comrades, shall we do?

[*Extending the Bow to PHILOCTETES.*

ULYSSES *rushes on the Stage.*

ULYSSES, PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

*Ulys.* What wouldst thou do,  
O vilest of mankind? Wilt thou not hence,  
The sacred arms resigning to my hand?

*Phi.* Ha! who is this?—Ulysses do I hear?

*Ulys.* Aye! I, who stand before thee, am Ulysses.

*Phi.* O! I am sold, undone. This is the wretch  
Who snared, and hath despoiled me of mine arms.

*Ulys.* 'Tis I, in sooth—none else. I own the deed.

*Phi.* Restore, resign the arms to me, my son.

*Ulys.* This, did he wish, he would not dare to grant.

But thou must hence with us, or these around  
By force shall drag thee.

*Phi.* Villain! of the vile  
At once the vilest, and most daring too,  
Shall these by force constrain me?

*Ulys.* Aye! unless  
Thou go spontaneous.

*Phi.* O thou Lemnian land!  
Thou all-controlling flame, by Vulcan framed,  
Can wrong like this be borne, and shall he dare  
To force me from thy shelter?

*Ulys.* It is Jove,  
Yes, Jove, supreme controller of the land,  
Jove thus hath willed—and I but do his will.

*Phi.* Detested wretch! what falsehoods dost  
thou frame!  
The Gods alleging—thou dost tax the Gods  
With lies, to gloss thine own dissembling guile.

*Ulys.* No; they are ever true. Yet, in this way,  
Thou must proceed.

*Phi.* I will not.

*Ulys.* But thou shalt—

Thou must obey.

*Phi.* Ah! what a doom is mine!

Did then my sire beget me as a slave,

And not the heir of freedom?

*Ulys.* Nay, not thus;

But mated with the noblest;—leagued with whom

Thou must take Troy, and raze her towers to earth.

*Phi.* O never! were I doomed to every woe,

While yet for me this lofty shore stands firm.

*Ulys.* What wilt thou do then?

*Phi.* I will cast me down

From rock on rock, and bathe my brow in blood.

*Ulys.* Ho—seize him—lest he execute his threat.

*Phi.* What do ye suffer, O my hands! deprived

Of your loved bow—by this base wretch ensnared.

O thou, whose wisdom claims no kindred tie

With honour and with freedom, with what wiles

Hast thou beguiled me, with what arts deceived!

Making this youth thy tool—unknown to me—

Unworthy to partake thine infamy—

Of my regard more worthy, who but knew,

Without a thought, to work thy base command.

Remorse, I see, corrodes his bosom now

For his own guilt, and grief for my despair.  
 Thy faithless soul, for ever versed in wiles,  
 Alike against his nature and his will,  
 Hath well foretaught him to be wise in guilt.  
 And now, O wretch ! thou deem'st to drag me,  
                     bound,  
 From this drear cavern, where thyself exposed me,  
 Deserted—friendless—from my home afar—  
 A corpse among the living. Vengeance blast thee !  
 Ah ! oft for this due vengeance have I prayed,  
 But Heaven to me accords no favouring boon,  
 And thou liv'st on exulting, while I pine  
 A very wretch, involved in countless ills,  
 To thee a mockery, and the brother-Kings,  
 The sons of Atreus, whose base tool thou art.  
 'Thou, by their wiles ensnared, and bound by oath,  
 Didst share th' emprise. Me, of mine own free  
                     will,  
 Who sailed to battle with my <sup>2</sup> seven good ships,

---

<sup>1</sup> Ulysses, unwilling to go among the other Greeks to the siege of Troy, feigned himself mad ; but, being detected by Palamedes, was obliged to join them.—Francklin.

<sup>2</sup> Τῶν δὲ Φιλοκτήτης ἤρχεν τόξων ἦν ἰδώς  
 ἑπτὰ νῆων.

Hom. Il. ii.

Have they thrust forth to exile, as thou say'st,  
 Charging on them the crime they charge on thee.  
 And now why seek me? Wherefore drag me hence?  
 I, who am nothing, dead long since to you!  
 How, O thou wretch, most hateful to the Gods!  
 Am I not lame, my wound offensive still?  
 How can ye serve the Gods in prayer?—how slay  
 The votive victims, if I share your bark?  
 How pour libations due? Such was the plea  
 On which ye first expelled me. . Curses on ye!  
 Ye, who have wronged me thus, yourselves shall  
     meet

An equal doom, if Heaven cares aught for justice.  
 I know, I know it does, for never else  
 Would ye have voyaged for a wretch like me,  
 Had not a goad from Heaven itself constrained you.  
<sup>3</sup> But, O my father-land, all-seeing Gods!  
 Avenge, avenge me in your own good time  
 On all my foes, if ye, indeed, have aught  
 Of pity for a wretch, who pines in ills,

---

<sup>3</sup> Wakefield reads here, Ω σὺρτ' ἡ—conjecturing that Philoctetes meant to apostrophize the land of Lemnos. The conjecture, like most of the same editor, is ingenious but fanciful.

Worthiest of pity. Could I see them fall,  
I think my pangs would never wake again !

*Ch.* Stern is the stranger, and his words are stern,  
Ulysses, and he will not bend to ills.

*Ulys.* Much to his passionate speech could I reply  
If time were meet ;—one word must now suffice.  
When Greece needs men like this, such then am I—  
When just and pious men th' emergence asks,  
None wilt thou find more pious than myself.  
'Tis still my wish to triumph over all  
Excepting thee—to thee I promptly yield.

[*To the CHORUS.*

Release your charge, nor hold him longer thus :  
Let him remain. We have no need of thee,

[*To PHILOCTETES.*

So but thine arms are ours,—since in the camp  
Teucer is present, practised in this art ;—  
I, too, am no less skilful than thyself  
To bend the bow, and aim th' unerring shaft.  
What ask we then of thee ? Back to thy cave,  
And pace with sullen tread the Lemnian isle ;  
Let us away—perchance this prize for me  
May win the fame to thee by Heaven assigned.

*Phi.* Ah me ! what can I do ? And shalt thou  
shine

Glorious 'mid Greece, with these mine arms adorned?

*Ulys.* Answer me not, for I am now departing.

*Phi.* Son of Achilles, shall thy voice no more  
Address me—but wilt thou, too, leave me thus?

*Ulys.* Retire, nor heed him, generous as thou  
art,

Lest woman-pity mar our better fortune.

*Phi.* Will ye, too, strangers, leave me thus for-  
lorn,

A wretch abandoned, nor have pity on me?

*Ch.* This youth is our commander—what to thee  
He shall reply, the same we answer too.

*Neop.* Ulysses will reproach me, as too prone  
To weak compassion—yet, if such his will  
Remain, till in the ship our mariners  
Are ready, and our vows to Heaven are made.  
Meantime his purpose, haply, he may change  
More to our profit;—haste we now away;  
Ye, when we call, with speed obey the summons.

STROPHE I.

*Phi.* O dwelling of the caverned rock,  
By changing seasons cheered, or cooled,  
How am I then, unhappy! doomed  
Never to quit thy drear abode;



But thou wilt be my shelter ev'n in death.

Woe, woe is me!

O cheerless cave, replete

With all that wrings the joyless breast,

Whence shall my daily food

Be won, and to my need

Who shall extend relief;—what cheering hope?

<sup>4</sup> O would the direful brood

Of Harpies, flapping hoarse their sounding wings,

Waft me aloft, for I can bear no more!

#### STROPHE II.

*Ch.* Thou, thou alone, unhappy! on thine head

Hast drawn these woes—no other hand

On thee hath wreaked this doom—

When wisdom called thee to decide,

Thy free election chose the heavier ill.

<sup>4</sup> There is much diversity of opinion respecting the true reading of this passage. Aldus has *πρωγάδης*; Gedicke, *πλωγάδης*. Several other conjectures are made by the Scholiast. Vossius, however, considers *πρώαδης* (from the obsolete word *πρώειν*, *cadere*) the preferable reading, which, Erfurdt says, he embraces for want of a better. The allusion is probably to the Harpies.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Phi.* I then, a wretch, a hopeless wretch,  
Wasted by ever-gnawing pangs,  
From henceforth in extremest woe,  
Torn from the converse of mankind,  
Here must abide and perish—Ah what doom  
Of misery—  
No more with food supplied,  
With winged shaft and vigorous hand  
Seizing the prey no more :  
But unsuspected fraud  
And wily words my cooler sense beguiled.  
Ah ! could I see the wretch,  
Who planned the guileful scheme, like me con-  
signed,  
Through equal years to equal agony !

## ANTISTROPHE II.

*Ch.* The doom, the doom of Heaven—no trea-  
cherous scheme  
Framed by my hand hath wrought thee this !  
Turn then, on others turn  
Thy bitter curse of agony ;  
E'en this I seek, that thou my kindness spurn not.

## STROPHE III.

*Phi.* Ah me! Now seated on the shore  
Of the white-foaming main,  
He mocks me, poising in his hand  
The solace of my woes,  
Which none of mortals, save myself, hath borne.  
My bow, my only friend,  
And wrested from a friendly hand,  
How wouldst thou look, if sight and sense were thine,  
In pity on the friend  
Of Hercules—thus plunged  
In heaviest ills, who ne'er shall bend thee more!  
Henceforth—how sad the change!  
Wilt thou obey a man of many wiles;  
Attesting impious fraud,  
Beholding one abandoned and accursed,  
Who plots unnumbered crimes—all woes  
Which on my head hath base Ulysses heaped!

## STROPHE IV.

*Ch.* To speak the truth with frankness is the  
part  
Of manly bosoms—not to vent  
In vehement speech invidious wrath.

Our King, from all the chiefs  
Of Greece preferred, by *his* good counsels led,  
Hath done a public service to the state.

## ANTISTROPHE III.

*Phi.* Ye winged tribes, ye tameless herds  
Who ever range the hills  
Of this inhospitable isle ;  
Come from your coverts now  
Undaunted—I no longer wield  
The bow, so feared before,  
To feeble wretchedness consigned.  
Henceforth the spot is left unguarded all,  
And ye have nought to dread.  
Come—'tis the moment now,  
Blood to avenge with blood, and on my flesh  
Your angry vengeance sate,  
For I am quickly sinking to my doom !  
What can supply my wants,  
Who on the empty air alone must feed,  
Bereft of all the genial food,  
Earth, nurse of man, produces for her sons ?

## ANTISTROPHE IV.

*Ch.* If thou regard the man who comes, to thee

Benevolent, his cares requite.  
 For know, know well, for thee  
 Escape is open still.  
 Hard is thy fate to bear, and yet  
 Unschooled to meet the wills its doom involves.

*Phi.* Again, again thou wak'st mine ancient woes  
 To new remembrance keen ;  
 The worthiest thou of all who e'er have trod  
 Our isle, why wound me thus—what hast thou done ?

*Ch.* Why say'st thou this ?

*Phi.* If thou indulge a hope  
 To bear me yet to Troy's detested land.

*Ch.* Such to my thought the wisest scheme ap-  
 pears.

*Phi.* Then, then this moment leave me to my doom.

*Ch.* Welcome, most welcome, is thy bidding  
 now,  
 And cheerful I obey.—

Away—away !

Seek we the ship, obedient to our chief.

*Phi.* ' Go not, I pray, by Jove who hears the  
 curse !

<sup>5</sup> Ἀπαίτω Δίδς.—“ Jove who is called to witness by suppliants.”

*Ch.* Be calmer then.

*Phi.* Ah! strangers, tarry by the Gods!

*Ch.* What means

This sudden cry?

*Phi.* Ah miserable me!

Fate! unrelenting fate! I am undone—

A very wretch accurst!

My foot, my foot, how can I yet endure thee?

How can I yet live on?

Return, O strangers, yet awhile return.

*Ch.* What does thy purpose vary now

From all thy recent speech expressed?

*Phi.* Shall one be blamed, who, maddening in  
his pain,

Utters delirious and distracted words?

*Ch.* Go then, as we exhort thee, wretched man!

*Phi.* O never, never!—Fixed is my resolve,

Though the dread Lord of lightning blast me here

With the red flashing of his fiery bolts.

Let Ilion perish, with each hated chief,

Who, unrelenting, spurned this deadly wound.

But ye, O strangers, grant but one brief prayer!

*Ch.* What is thy will?

*Phi.* A sword, or sharpened axe,

Or deadlier weapon, to my need convey.

*Ch.* What can a gift like this achieve for thee?

*Phi.* To lop with mine own hand this head—  
these limbs—

My soul is bent on death.

*Ch.* Why thus?

*Phi.* To seek my much-loved sire—

*Ch.* Whither on earth?

*Phi.* Nay; in the dreary grave,  
For light and life are his no more.  
My country! O my country, most beloved!  
How, thus abandoned, should I look on thee,  
I, who have left thy sacred streams  
To aid the legions of detested Greece,  
And thus am nothing now!

*Ch.* Nay; now indeed long since beside my  
ship  
Had I been walking, save that I descried  
Ulysses coming with Achilles' son.  
Swift they approach, and now before us stand.

*Enter* NEOPTOLEMUS *and* ULYSSES.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

*Ulys.* Wilt thou not tell me, wherefore on this way

Thou steal'st thus earnest to retrace thy path?

*Neop.* To make atonement for my former errors.

*Ulys.* Thy words amaze me—Wherein hast thou  
erred?

*Neop.* Wherein by thee and all th' united host  
Persuaded—

*Ulys.* What then, that becomes thee not,  
Hast thou accomplished?

*Neop.* With ungenerous guile  
And fraudulent arts a noble soul betrayed.

*Ulys.* Whom—whom? Ah me! What new design  
impels thee?

*Neop.* Nought new indeed—but to the son of  
Pœas—

*Ulys.* What wilt thou do?—How fear is stealing  
on me.

*Neop.* From whom I took these arms, to him  
once more—

*Ulys.* O Jove! what say'st thou? Mean'st thou  
to restore them?

*Neop.* Yes; for I won and keep them still by  
baseness.

*Ulys.* Nay, by the Gods! in mockery speak'st  
thou thus?

*Neop.* Aye—if to speak the truth be mockery!



*Ulys.* What, son of great Achilles, dost thou say?

What hast thou uttered?

*Neop.* Will it pleasure thee  
That twice and thrice I should repeat my words?

*Ulys.* 'Twas sore against my will to hear them  
once.

*Neop.* Be now assured, for thou hast heard the  
whole.

*Ulys.* There is, there is, who will prevent the  
deed.

*Neop.* Ha—who shall dare to hinder me in this?

*Ulys.* Th' assembled host of Greece—among  
them I.

*Neop.* Wise though thou art, thy words betray  
no wisdom.

*Ulys.* Neither thy words nor actions speak thee  
wise.

*Neop.* If both are just, 'tis better far than wis-  
dom.

*Ulys.* How is it just the trophies to restore,  
By my sage counsels gained?

*Neop.* I grossly erred,  
And would retrieve mine error.

*Ulys.* Fear'st thou not,

For such an act, th' avenging host of Greece?

*Neop.* <sup>o</sup> In a just cause thy terrors I despise,  
Nor shall thy hand direct me at thy will.

*Ulys.* Henceforth with Troy we war not, but  
with thee.

*Neop.* Well—be it so.

*Ulys.* Seest thou my right hand laid  
On my sword's hilt?

*Neop.* And dost not thou see mine  
In the same act; nor shall it linger there?

*Ulys.* I will forbear—but when the tale I tell  
To our whole army, they will best chastise thee.

*Neop.* Thy prudence I commend—act ever thus,  
And cause of sorrow rarely will be thine.—  
Come forth, thou son of Pœas, Philoctetes,  
Quitting once more thy rocky dwelling place.

*Phi.* Ah! what new clamour through my cave  
resounds?

---

<sup>o</sup> There is no terror, Cassius, in thy threats,  
For I am armed so strong in honesty,  
That they pass by me as the idle wind,  
Which I regard not.

Jul. Cæsar, Act iv. Sc. 3.

Why am I called? What, strangers, is your will?  
Alas! some foul device! And are ye come  
To heap fresh sorrows on my former woes?

*Neop.* Courage—and hear the words I bring thee  
now.

*Phi.* I hear in terror.—By thy words betrayed,  
To woe already have those words consigned me!

*Neop.* Is there no place for true repentance  
still?

*Phi.* Such were thy words, so winning, when  
mine arms

Thou stolest, frank in aspect, false in heart.

*Neop.* Such are not now—I wish thee but to  
hear me.

Still art thou firmly fixed to linger here,  
Or wilt thou share our voyage?

*Phi.* Hush! no more—

If thou speak thus, thy words are bootless all.

*Neop.* Art thou decided?

*Phi.* Aye, far more resolved  
Than words can tell thee!

*Neop.* Much could I have wished  
My words might yet persuade thee; but if speech  
Can nought avail my purpose, I am mute.

*Phi.* <sup>7</sup> Thy words are vain indeed. Thy fraudulent soul

Shall never win my friendly thought again ;  
Thou, who by craft of life itself dost rob me,  
And then with idle exhortations com'st,  
Thou basest son of a most noble sire !  
Perdition seize ye all—th' Atridæ first,  
Ulysses next, then thee !

*Neop.* Forbear thy curse,  
And from my hand again thine arms receive.

*Phi.* What say'st thou ! Shall we then be twice  
deceived ?

*Neop.* Nay—<sup>8</sup> by the awe of holy Jove I swear !

<sup>7</sup> Came he right now to sing a raven's note,  
Whose dismal tone bereft my vital powers,  
And thinks he that the chirping of a wren,  
By crying comfort from a hollow breast,  
Can chase away the first conceived sound ?  
Hide not thy poison with such sugared words.

Sec. Part Hen. VI. Act iii. Sc. 2.

<sup>8</sup> A most solemn and inviolable form of adjuration. So—  
Ω θεῶν ἁγίων σίβας.—Æd. Tyr. 830.

'Αλλ' εἰ μὲν ἁγίων ἰστί σοι  
Πίδυς σίβας.

Æsch. Eum. 888.

*Phi.* O words most welcome, if sincerely breathed.

*Neop.* Actions shall prove their truth. Stretch  
forth thine hand,

And once again be master of thine arms.

[*Gives him the bow, &c.*

ULYSSES *rushes in.*

*Ulys.* That I forbid it, let the Gods attest,  
Both for the Atridæ, and th' united host!

*Phi.* Whose voice is this, my son? And do I hear,  
Indeed, Ulysses?

*Ulys.* Know thou one is nigh,  
Who yet will drag thee to the plains of Troy,  
Whether Achilles' son consent, or not.

*Phi.* Not unavenged, if well this dart be aimed.

*Neop.* <sup>9</sup>No—aim it not! O, by the Gods, forbear.

*Phi.* Nay—by the Gods, my son, release my  
hand.

*Neop.* I will not loose thee.

*Phi.* Why prevent me thus  
From wreaking vengeance on a foe abhorred?

<sup>9</sup> The readers of *Telemachus* will, doubtless, remember in how much more favourable a light the character of Ulysses is represented by Fenelon.

*Neop.* Such deed were worthy nor of thee, nor  
me.

*Phi.* Know this, at least, these leaders of the  
Greeks

Are boastful liars, dastards in the fight,  
Though trebly valiant in insulting words.

*Neop.* Well—thou hast now thine arms; nor is  
there aught

Of wrath or censure thou canst vent on me.

*Phi.* None, none—well hast thou proved the  
generous stock

Of which thou cam'st—not Sisyphus thy sire,  
But great Achilles—noblest while he lived,  
And now the mightiest of the mighty dead.

*Neop.* To hear my father's praise and mine from  
thee

Is grateful to my soul—but hear thou too,  
What I would seek of thee. The woes which  
Heaven

Assigns to mortals, man perforce must bear.  
But they who sink in voluntary ills,  
As thou dost now, no valid claim can plead  
To pardon, or to pity. Thou art grown  
Wild by thy sufferings, deaf to counsels sage.  
If one in friendship warns thee for thy good,

He wakes thy hate, and is esteemed thy foe.  
 Yet I will speak, and Jove, the Lord of oaths,  
 Invoke to witness mine unsullied truth.  
 Know thou too this, and grave it on thy mind.  
 This plague to thee the will of Heaven ordains,  
 Since to the guard of Chrysa thy rash foot  
 Drew nigh,<sup>10</sup> the watchful Dragon-Power con-  
                   cealed,  
 Mysterious guardian of th' uncovered shrine.  
 Be well assured that never shalt thou win  
 Rest from thy grievous pangs, while yon fair sun  
 Mounts from the east, and to the west declines,  
 Till of thine own free will to Ilium borne,

---

<sup>10</sup> Serpents were often the guardians of shrines; and more particularly of treasures.—

Melius legatus adíssem  
 Sauromatas rabidos, servatoremque cruentum  
 Bebrycii nemoris.

Stat. Theb. xi. 352.

It will also be remembered that Virgil describes the astonishment of Æneas, on seeing one of these animals at his father's tomb.

Incertus geniumne loci, famulumne parentis  
 Esse putet.

Æn. v. 84.

The sons of Esculapius there shall heal  
Thy wasting plague—while thy good shafts, combined

With my right hand, subvert the Trojan towers.  
Now will I tell thee how I know the fates.  
We seized a captive from beleaguered Troy,  
The first of prophets, Helenus, who said  
That thus must all things be—and added yet,  
That ere the summer fled, had Heaven decreed  
The Trojan towers to ruin; and he pledged  
His life the forfeit if his words were false.  
Since then thou know'st the whole, assenting yield.  
It is a proud distinction to be proved  
The noblest chief of Greece—first to obtain  
Release from all thy sufferings, then to rise  
Sublime to Glory's loftiest height, and take  
Proud Troy, prolific of so many woes.

*Phi.* Unwelcome life—ah why detain me still  
In day's fair light, nor plunge me in the tomb?  
Ah me! what shall I do—or how reject  
Such pleas, preferred by friendship so sincere?  
But say I yield—how, conscious of such deed  
Can I meet Heaven's broad eye? with whom converse?



Ye too,<sup>1</sup> bright orbs, who all my woes behold,  
 How will ye brook that I should e'er unite  
 With the Atridæ, who have wronged me thus,  
 Or with Laertes' all-accursed son ?  
 No thought of past affliction wounds my heart,  
 But fancy pictures what I yet may bear.  
 The mind that once gives birth to deeds of baseness,  
 A base instructress, trains to every ill.  
 Such words I marvel much to hear from thee ;  
 It ill becomes thyself to sail for Troy,  
 Or bring my succour to the foes who scorned  
                   thee,  
 Thy Father's arms despoiling, and the meed  
 \*Which to bold Ajax justice had assigned

<sup>1</sup> Camerarius understands this passage of "his eyes," as at *Œdip. Tyr.* 1270. Brunck seems to refer it to the stars. Literally. "Ye orbs, that witness every thing which happens to me."

<sup>2</sup> These two lines, Brunck observes, are evidently spurious : for how should Philoctetes know any thing about the contest for the arms of Achilles, beyond what he had heard from Neoptolemus, who did not even mention the name of Ajax as a competitor for the prize ? It is, however, possible, that the meaning intended to be conveyed is simply this—that if

Awarding to Ulysses! Wouldst thou then  
 With such thyself unite, and force me too?  
 No, no, my son—thy former pledge redeem—  
 Conduct me home—and thou in Scyros dwell,  
 Leaving those villains to the doom they merit.  
 Thus wilt thou reap a double meed—from me  
 And from thy father—nor, by aiding guilt,  
 Show that thy soul is moulded vile as theirs.

*Neop.* Thy words have show of reason—still I  
 wish

That, trusting yet to me and to the Gods,  
 Thou from this land with me thy friend wouldst sail.

*Phi.* What, to the Trojan plains, and the loathed  
 race

Of Atreus, with this agonizing foot?

*Neop.* To those at least who will relieve thy  
 foot

From this fell venom, and thy pangs dispel.

*Phi.* <sup>3</sup> O thou whose pleading would to baseness  
 lure me—

the arms had really been given to the most worthy, justice  
 would have awarded them to Ajax rather than to Ulysses.

<sup>3</sup> Δεινὸν αἴτιον ἐπιείκεια—dirum consilium dans—αἴτιον sometimes

What dost thou mean?

*Neop.* A deed I deem to thee  
And me most glorious.

*Phi.* Canst thou argue thus,  
Nor blush to think upon the Gods in heaven?

*Neop.* Why should I blush to seek another's  
welfare?

*Phi.* Dost thou regard my welfare, or the good  
Of Atreus' sons?

*Neop.* In friendship for thyself  
I speak—and such a friend my words attest me.

*Phi.* How, if thou wouldst betray me to my foes?

*Neop.* Learn, O my friend, to be less fierce in  
sorrow.

*Phi.* I know thee—thou wilt work my ruin yet  
By specious words.

*Neop.* Far be such guile from me!  
Thou dost not know my purpose.

*Phi.* This I know—  
The false Atridæ drove me into exile.

---

signifying *suadere*, *hortari*. *Æsch. Choeph. 533. Supp. 187.*  
Other passages are cited by Musgrave. We have given the  
sense of the passage rather than the literal translation.

*Neop.* But think, though once they exciled, may  
they not

Seek now to save thee?

*Phi.* Never shall I gaze,  
At least with mine own will, on hated Troy.

*Neop.* What shall we do then, if our earnest  
prayers

And strongest pleas avail not to persuade thee?  
For me—'twere easier far to spare my words,  
For thee to live, as now, in agony.

*Phi.* And let me suffer what my fate demands.  
But the first pledge, by thy right hand conveyed  
To bear me home—this, this, my son, redeem.  
Delay not now, nor waste thy thoughts on Troy.  
Enough of sighs already hath she cost me.

## TROCHAICS.

*Neop.* Go we then, if such thy pleasure.

*Phi.* O how generous is the word!

*Neop.* Plant thy footsteps now more firmly.

*Phi.* I with all my strength obey.

*Neop.* How shall I evade the vengeance  
Of the Argives?

*Phi.* Heed it not.

*Neop.* Should they on my much loved country  
Wreak their vengeance?

*Phi.* I will aid—

*Neop.* What canst thou achieve to aid me?

*Phi.* With Alcides' conquering arms—

*Neop.* Ah, how sayst thou?

*Phi.* I will drive them  
From thy country.

*Neop.* Then, O friend,  
If thou wilt redeem thy promise,  
Bid this land a last farewell.

<sup>4</sup>*Herc.* Not yet, O son of Pœas, ere once more  
Our accents reach thine ear;  
Know, 'tis the voice of Hercules thou hear'st—  
His form thine eyes behold.  
To watch thy fortunes I awhile have left  
My own celestial seat,

---

<sup>4</sup> It is hardly requisite to point out in what strict accordance with the canon of Horace is the appearance of Hercules.

Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus  
Inciderit.

Ars. Poet. 191.

That Jove's almighty mandate I may breathe,  
And in his name forbid thy purposed course.  
Thou to my words give heed.  
Of mine own fortunes would I first remind thee—  
What 'toils enduring and what perils braved,  
I won th' undying glories, which thou seest.  
Know, toils like these to thee hath Heaven assigned,  
That fame immortal may requite thy deeds.  
When with this warrior thou hast sailed to Troy,  
First shall thine agonizing pest be healed,  
Then, judged the bravest of th' embattled host,  
Paris, the guilty cause of all these woes,  
Thou with my arrows shalt of life bereave ;  
And raze proud Troy, and to thy palace send  
The richest booty of the captured town—  
To thy loved Father by fair Œta's vales.  
Whate'er of spoils thy martial deeds requite,  
Place as memorials of my shafts and bow  
On my funereal pyre!—Achilles' son,  
Thee too I thus command—apart from him

---

<sup>5</sup> Hac arte Pollux et vagus Hercules  
Enisus, arces attigit igneas.

Hor.

Thou canst not take the Trojan towers—nor he  
 Apart from thee—bound in confederate faith  
 ‘Like two fierce lions, each the other guard;  
 And I to Ilium’s walls will quickly send  
 Sage Esculapius, healer of thy wound.  
 Once more must Troy be taken by mine arms—  
 And O, remember, when her lofty towers  
 Are laid in ruins, to revere the Gods.  
 Second to this all else great Jove esteems—  
 ‘True piety alone defies the grave;  
 Let mortals live or die—this blooms for ever.

*Phi.* O thou whose words are dearest to my soul,  
 In happy hour vouchsafed,  
 I will not disobey thy will.

*Neop.* My purpose too in this accords with his.

*Herc.* No longer then the deed delay

‘ So two young mountain-lions nursed with blood,  
 In deep recesses of the gloomy wood,  
 Rush fearless to the plains, and, uncontrolled,  
 Depopulate the stalls, and waste the fold.

Hom. v. 681.

‘ Ἀριτὴ δὲ, καὶ θάνη τις, οὐκ ἀπόλλυται  
 Ζη δ’ οὐκ ἴτ’ ὄντος σώματος.

Eurip.

The wind and wave invite—

The favouring gales are breathing from the stern.

*Phi.* Come, as we go, this earth will I adore.

Farewell, my rocky home,

Ye nymphs who haunt the watery meads,

Thou wild roar of the hoarse resounding sea,

Where oft within my cave

The southern blast in hoary dews

Has bathed my head ;—while many a bitter groan

Responsive to my voice th' <sup>8</sup>Hermæan mount

Sent in wild murmurs on the echoing blast !

Now, ye pure founts, thou sweet and <sup>9</sup>crystal stream,

I quit you, quit you now,

An unexpected joy !

Farewell, thou sea-encircled Lemnian plain—

<sup>8</sup> Hoc erat, in gelido quare Pœantius heros

Voce fatigaret Lemnia saxa sua.

Co. Trist. v. i. 61.

<sup>9</sup> For Λύκιον, the reading adopted by Brunck, who says, on the authority of the scholiast, that there was a fountain of that name in Lemnos, dedicated to and named from the Lycian Apollo, we have preferred the reading of Erfurdt, γλυκίον. If this part of the island were indeed, as Philoctetes said, uninhabited, how came the Lycian Apollo to be worshipped there ?



O speed me with a prosperous course  
 Where <sup>10</sup>Fate's resistless will—and the kind words  
 Of generous friends impel me, and the God,  
 The all-subduing God, who willed it thus!

*Ch.* Yea, let us all together part,  
 Paying due honours to the Ocean-Nymphs  
 To come 'protectors of our homeward course.

---

<sup>10</sup> *Μοῖρα μεγάλη*. Literally, “*Ingens fatum*.” So Horace,  
*Post ingentia fata Deorum in templa recepti*.

Hor. Ep. ii. 1, 6.

After the deeds of illustrious lives destined by fate.

<sup>1</sup> *Σωτήρας*. This word, which is masculine, is here joined to the feminine *Νύμφαις*. Similar instances may be seen. Æsch. Sep. Theb. 321, *ὑπεραξία σωτήρ*. So Sophocles, *τύχη σωτήρ*.

**ELECTRA.**



## ELECTRA.

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EVERY reader of the ancient Greek drama must be forcibly struck with the narrowness of the range within which the great Tragic writers appear to have been confined, as to the selection of their subjects. The misfortunes of the families of Œdipus and of Atreus, with a few other legends of the same stamp, supplied, in a great measure, that scanty fountain, out of which all were contented to draw. Thus, on the same basis are founded the *Electra* of Sophocles, the *Chœphoræ* of Æschylus, and the *Electra* of Euripides. Yet it may reasonably be doubted whether, in the present instance at least, this similarity of subject should not

be attributed rather to a spirit of rivalry than a deficiency of materials. It is palpably evident, that Euripides intends to ridicule the manner in which Æschylus has managed the discovery of Orestes by his sister Electra; and, consequently, that *his* drama must have been produced subsequently to that of his great predecessor. We may, therefore, pronounce, without much hesitation, that the Chœphoræ of Æschylus appeared first of the three, the Electra of Sophocles next, and the Electra of Euripides last.

To decide between the merits of the two former compositions would be a task not less invidious than difficult. If the Chœphoræ of Æschylus is possessed of more striking beauties, the Electra of Sophocles has fewer and less glaring defects. If Æschylus rises into a sublimity which is never equalled by Sophocles, as in the relation of Clytemnestra's dream at the tomb of Agamemnon, neither does Sophocles degenerate into absurd and inconsistent puerilities, as in the recognition of Orestes by his sister, by reason of the exact correspondence of their footsteps. In the one there is a strange mixture of grandeur with meanness, elegance with

coarseness, beauty with deformity—the other is uniformly polished, dignified, and chaste. The former may be compared to the Eagle, which, in its impetuous and irregular flight, at one moment is ascending to the sun, and, at another, swooping downward to the earth; the latter may be likened to the silver Swan, gliding in its calm and majestic course through the regions of the liquid air, neither soaring to confront the effulgence of the meridian orb, nor sinking to soil the purity of its plumage by the pollution of the dust of earth.

With either of these interesting productions the *Electra* of Euripides is scarcely worthy of a comparison. With many strokes of true pathos, and occasional passages of real sublimity, it combines a puerile simplicity which will sometimes excite laughter, and sometimes create disgust. The poet who can gravely inform his audience, that “a rich man needs no more for the supply of the cravings of nature than a poor man,” and, that “strong wine diluted with water will afford a very agreeable beverage,” can hardly enter the lists upon equal terms either with Sophocles or with Æschylus. In proof of our judgement we would refer to the drama itself,

while we proceed to offer a few remarks on that with which we are more immediately concerned.

The point on which all the ancient dramatists have most strikingly failed is the delineation of the female character. Whether in deference to the popular opinion respecting the sex, or in subservience to their own personal prejudices, it is not easy to decide; but the fact is certain, that, with the exception of our author's Antigone, there are few, if any, of the softer sex, among the dramatic characters of the ancients, who are entitled to our unqualified approbation. The Electra of Sophocles is a haughty high-spirited woman, impressed, according to the erroneous morality of that age, with a full persuasion that it was her solemn and imperative duty to avenge her father's death by shedding the blood of her mother, by whom he had been treacherously murdered. For such vindictive and implacable resentment, our modern ladies will not—nor is it desirable that they should—make any allowance. In all other respects, as a sister and a friend, her character is calculated to excite an interest;—at least so long as she is unfortunate, and until she becomes guilty.

The gradual developement of incidents in this drama is admirably managed; indeed, it is *here* that Sophocles invariably excels. Orestes, after an absence of some years, revisits his native land, for the purpose of avenging the murder of his father, Agamemnon, accompanied by an attendant, who is the adviser and instigator of the deed. After feasting his eyes with the view of his much-loved country—

“ Dulces reminiscitur Argos”—

the old man consults with him on the most politic mode of commencing operations. Though he hears the mourning accents of Electra, and longs to embrace her, yet he acquiesces in the prudent direction of his aged counsellor, and first obeys the command of Phœbus, in presenting offerings at his father's tomb. The remorseless hatred and shameless effrontery of Clytemnestra, the politic servility of Chrysothemis, the dauntless intrepidity of Electra, and the generous sympathy of the Chorus, beautifully diversify the scene, and sustain the interest till tidings arrive that Orestes is no more. The manner in which this intelligence is received is exquisitely characteristic of the different parties: Electra



refuses all consolation, and, on the entrance of Orestes himself, disguised as the bearer of his own ashes, a scene ensues which, for deep and pathetic interest, has no superior in the whole circle of tragic poetry. Taking the urn in her hands, Electra apostrophises her departed brother in terms of such tender lamentation, that Orestes can refrain no longer, but, impelled by the irresistible impulse of nature, discovers himself to his sister. Nothing can be more finely imagined or more skilfully executed than this abrupt transition from the depth of misery and despair to the transports of affection and triumph. The exuberant joy of Electra, which cannot be restrained, but breaks forth even amidst the most important consultations, is infinitely more pleasing and natural than the cool composure with which she receives her returning brother, in the dramas both of Æschylus and Euripides.

The work of death is well managed, avoiding on the one hand the improbability of Æschylus, and on the other, the awkward and impotent contrivance of Euripides. Both these dramatists, by making Ægisthus the first victim, suffer the ardour

of revenge to cool, and by this means render the sacrifice of Clytemnestra more hideous and unnatural. Sophocles, with better judgement, has made Clytemnestra the first to fall; and, instead of supposing Electra to be present at and participating in the murder, only assigns to her the office of watching against a surprise. The covering of the dead body with a veil, which is removed by Ægisthus himself, must have been peculiarly effective in representation.

One defect alone is here observable in Sophocles. When Electra hears, behind the scenes, the dying exclamation of her mother, she cries out, "strike, if thou canst, a second blow." This excessive barbarity is neither necessary nor natural; at such a moment Electra, however transported with rage, ought to have remembered that Clytemnestra was still her mother. This fault, nevertheless, is not chargeable so much upon Sophocles as upon the age in which he lived; and it is but fair to remark, that his writings, taken as a whole, present the most attractive specimen of moral sentiment and fervent, though erring, piety, which remains to us out of the wreck of antiquity.

## **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

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**ATTENDANT.**

**ORESTES.**

**ELECTRA.**

**CHORUS OF VIRGINS.**

**CHRYSOthemis.**

**CLYTEMNESTRA.**

**ÆGISTHUS.**

## **MUTA PERSONA.**

**PYLADES.**

# ELECTRA.

---

ATTENDANT, ORESTES, PYLADES.

*Att.* O son of Agamemnon, who to Troy  
Led the confederate host, now mayst thou gaze  
On scenes, which ever woke thy fond desire.  
Here is the ancient Argos, which thy soul  
So thirsted to behold,—this is the grove  
Of wandering Io,<sup>1</sup> frenzy-stricken maid ;

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Οιστροπλήξ. This word is borrowed from the *Prom. Vinct.* of Æschylus, in which drama Iö is introduced. Her story is also narrated by Ovid.

And this, Orestes, the <sup>2</sup>Lycæan mart  
 Of the wolf-slaughtering God. That on the left  
 Is Juno's fane renowned, and whither now  
 We have arrived, thou see'st the rich Mycenæ.  
 This is the home of <sup>3</sup>Pelops' race, defiled  
 With frequent murders ;—on thy father's death,  
 From thy true sister's hand receiving thee,  
 I bore thee hence,—preserved thee,—trained thee up  
 To man,—Avenger of thy father's blood.  
 Now then, Orestes, and thou best of friends,  
 Now, Pylades, ye must resolve at once  
 What deed should be emprized. Lo! the glad  
                     beam  
 Of orient<sup>4</sup> morn awakes the sylvan choir  
 To matin hymns of gladness,—the pale stars  
 Wane on the brow of Night. Ere from the gates  
 One foot shall issue, be our plans matured

<sup>2</sup> Ἀγορὰ Λύκειος, a place sacred to Apollo. Λυκίος, or  
 λυκοκτορὸς, the wolf-slayer; so called from his killing wolves  
 when under the disguise of a shepherd to Admetus.—  
 Francklin.

<sup>3</sup> Sævam Pelopis domum.—Hor. lib. i. 6, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Matutini volucrum sub culmine cantus.—Virg. Æn. viii.  
 456.

No lingering pause th' important hour allows,  
But we must do and dare.

*Ores.* Most faithful thou,  
Most dear of servants! how dost thou evince,  
By manifest signs, thy firm unsullied truth,—  
E'en as the generous steed, though worn with age,  
In peril's hour his slumbering spirit wakes,  
' And pricks his ears erect, so thou too warm'st  
Our zeal, and art thyself the first to follow.  
Now I will speak my purpose;—do thou lend  
Prompt audience to my words,—and where I seem  
To swerve from prudence, curb my hastier mood.  
When to the Pythian oracle I came  
A suppliant, asking how I should exact  
Just retribution for my Father's blood,  
Phœbus, as thou shalt hear, this answer gave;—  
That I, devoid of arms or martial host,  
Should strike by stratagem the righteous blow.  
Since then the God's response we thus have heard,  
Go thou, when fit occasion shall arise,

---

<sup>5</sup> Si qua sonum procul arma dedere,  
Stare loco nescit: micat auribus, et tremit artus.

Virg. Geo. iii. 83, 84.

Within the palace,—learn what passes there,  
 That thou mayst bring a clear and full report.  
 On thee, thus changed by years and worn with time,  
 Thus habited,<sup>6</sup> suspicion will not fall.  
 Be this thy tale,—A Phocian stranger thou,  
 From <sup>7</sup>Phanoteus despatched, who is esteemed  
 By these the truest of their foreign <sup>8</sup>friends;  
 Say,—and <sup>9</sup>on oath confirm it, that, by fate  
 Urged to his doom, Orestes is no more,  
 Hurl'd at the Pythian contest from his car,

---

<sup>6</sup> ἡδισμένον, properly *floribus ornatum*. Musgrave proposes, *canis capillis variegatum*. We have followed Potter: “Thus attired.”

<sup>7</sup> Phanoteus. A small midland town of Phocis, says Francklin; and Brumoy even translates it Panope. With this rendering Erfurdt appears to accord, though that it is the proper name of a man, is evident from l. 663 of his own edition.

<sup>8</sup> Δορυξένος, literally, “ex hoste factus hospes.” Here, however, it appears to denote simply *hospes*.

<sup>9</sup> Much trouble is taken by commentators and translators to clear Orestes from the guilt of perjury. Lamentable blindness of superstition,—where a hero can only be exculpated by implicating a god! Phœbus, in the Eumenides of Æschylus, and Ion of Euripides, does not appear to very great advantage among his fellow divinities.

In the swift race. Thus let thy story run.  
First, with libations and with these shorn locks,  
Crowning my father's tomb, as willed the God,  
We, from the spot returning, in our hands  
Will bear the vessel formed with sides of brass,  
Which, as thou know'st, lies hid within the wood;  
That, with dissembling words, we may convey  
The welcome tidings,—how, in death consumed  
And burnt to ashes is my mortal frame.  
Nought will it grieve me, when in words deceased  
In act I live, and bear away renown.  
'Tis no ill <sup>10</sup>omen which ensures success.  
Oft have I known the wise, accounted dead  
In rumour's empty tale, to their own home  
Return once more, with brighter glories crowned.  
So would I trust, with equal fame preserved,  
I too shall shine a death-star to my foes.  
But, O my father-land,—ye Gods who rule

---

<sup>10</sup> The superstition of the Greeks, respecting words of good or ill omen, is remarkable. A striking instance occurs in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, where the messenger from Corinth salutes *Œdipus* “King of Thebes,” before he communicates the intelligence of the death of *Polybus*.



O'er this my country, bid me welcome here,  
And on my path your prospering smiles bestow :  
Thou, too, O palace of mine ancient sires,  
To thee I come, by Heaven's own impulse led,  
To cleanse, in just revenge, thy blood-stained halls.  
O send me not dishonoured from the land,  
But graced with wealth, restorer of my house !  
Enough of words. Be it thy care, old man,  
To execute thy task with caution meet,  
And we will hence,—in every arduous deed  
Occasion reigns great arbiter of all.

[*ELECTRA comes out of the palace.*

ELECTRA, ORESTES, ATTENDANT.

*Elec.* Ah me! unhappy me!

*Att.* Methought, my son, within the palace halls  
Some sad domestic sighed in stifled woe.

*Ores.* Is't not the poor Electra? Wilt thou here  
Awhile we pause and listen to her sorrows?

*Att.* It must not be. The will of Loxias first  
Must be obeyed, Now pour we to thy sire  
The purifying stream,—for this will bring

Might in the act, and victory at the close.

[ORESTES *and* ATTENDANT *retire.* ELECTRA  
*comes forward.*

*Elec.* O pure ethereal light,  
Thou air, with 'earth pervading equal space,  
How many a dirge of wild lament,  
How many a blow upon this bleeding breast,  
Hast thou for me attested, when dun Night  
Withdraws her murky veil.  
Through the long hours of darkness, each loathed  
couch  
Of these sad halls is conscious of my woe,  
How mine unhappy father I bewail,  
Whom not in far barbaric clime  
Ensanguined Mars laid low ;  
But my base mother, with her paramour,  
Ægisthus, as the woodman fells the oak,  
Hewed down with murderous axe.  
No heart, save mine, with gentle pity wrung,

---

<sup>1</sup> ἴσομοιρος—cui portio par datur. There are various opinions concerning this word, some interpreting ἄη, darkness. Light holding equal sway with darkness. The same thought occurs, Æsch. Chæph. 316, σκότῳ φῶς ἰσόμοιρον.

Laments for thee, my father, though thy doom  
Such pity well demands.

But never will I cease my wail,

Nor hush my bitter cries, while yet I gaze

On yon all-radiant stars,

Gaze on the orb of day ;—

But, like the hapless nightingale, bereft

Of her loved brood, before my native home

Pour the loud plaint of agony to all.

Ye dark abodes of Dis and Proserpine,

Thou Hermes, guide to hell—thou Awful Curse,

And ye, dread Furies, Offspring of the Gods,

Who on the basely murdered look,

On those who mount by stealth th' unhallowed  
couch ;

Come, aid me, and avenge the blood

Of my beloved sire,

And give my absent brother to mine arms ;

Alone no longer can I bear the weight

Of this o'erwhelming woe.

[*Enter* CHORUS.]

ELECTRA, CHORUS.<sup>2</sup>

## STROPHE I.

*Ch.* O daughter of a mother <sup>3</sup>sunk in crimes,  
 Why, why, Electra, dost thou pine  
 In ever-wasting woe,  
 For Agamemnon, by the wiles ensnared  
 Of thy most impious mother, and betrayed  
 To evil hands? If it be lawful thus  
 To speak, like doom be his who did the deed.

*Elec.* Offspring of sires illustrious, ye are come

<sup>2</sup> "It has been the subject of serious dispute," says Potter, "whether the Chorus is formed of virgins or of matrons. They are not once styled παρθένοι; nor, on the other hand, is there any allusion to their married state. Τυταῖαις is a common term. It is more consonant to manners, that the friends and companions of Electra should be virgins." Yet the Chorus address Electra by the term τέκνον, which would seem to intimate that they were older than herself; and she, as Brunck observes, could not be less than twenty-five years of age. However, if it be not more probable to consider them as virgins, it is perhaps more poetical—

"Dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter."

<sup>3</sup> Δυστανοτάτας, the same with ἰξωλιστάτης. So δύστηνι, Aj. 1307.

Thinking to solace my despair.—  
 I know your love,—I feel it,—in no part  
 Does it escape me,—yet I cannot cease  
 To weep in anguish o'er my Father's fall.  
 But ye, whose gentle bosoms well requite  
 The love that warms mine own,  
 O leave me, leave me, to indulge my woe!

## ANTISTROPHE I.

*Ch.* And yet from Pluto's lake, man's common home,  
 Thy sire thou never canst redeem  
 By shrieks or fervent prayers.  
 But thou, meanwhile, from temperate grief impelled  
 To ceaseless tears, art sinking in despair!  
 When from thy sorrows no release remains,  
 Why cherish thus intolerable woe?

*Elec.* Senseless were he who could so soon forget  
 A parent's miserable doom!  
 And more congenial to a soul like mine  
 Is she who mourns for Itys,—Itys still,  
 The timid bird, sad <sup>6</sup> messenger of Jove.

---

<sup>4</sup> Διὸς ἄγγελος. But this appellation is the exclusive property of the eagle. Can it mean "Veris nuntius," Διὸς being taken for "verni temporis?" The emendation, ἱερος ἄγγελος,

O wretched 'Niobe, thee too I deem  
 Divine, in rocky tomb  
 Who dost for ever weep, for ever sigh !

## STROPHE II.

*Ch.* Yet, daughter, not alone on thee  
 Of mortal birth such ills descend ;  
 In this thy griefs transcend not theirs within,  
 Sprung from one source, to thee by birth allied.  
 This doth Chrysothemis endure,  
 This Iphianassa bears,  
 And He, whose youthful spring in secret wanes,  
 Whom, yet with glory crowned,  
 May proud Mycenæ's towers  
 Greet to his throne restored, by favouring Jove  
 Led to his native land, thy loved Orestes.  
*Elec.* Whom I unceasingly await, unblest

is inadmissible on account of the metre. The nightingale, says Erfurdt, is called the messenger of Jove, because she is the messenger of spring, and Jove is the director of the seasons. With this solution we must, perforce, be satisfied.

<sup>5</sup> We need hardly refer to the exquisite description of Niobe in the *Antigone*, vol. i. p. 281. So Ovid. *Metam.* iii. 6, 311.

*Fixa cacumine montis*

*Liquitur, et lacrymas etiamnum marmora manant.*

With smiling children and connubial love,—  
In tears dissolved, and still oppressed  
With unexhausted woe,—while he forgets  
My cares, my fond instructions. What, oh what  
Of faithless tidings hath not mocked mine ear?  
He still desires to come,  
Desiring, yet delays.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

*Ch.* Nay, daughter, cheer thee, cheer thee yet!  
Still in yon starry heaven supreme  
Jove, all-beholding, all-directing, dwells.  
To him commit thy vengeance, nor indulge  
This bitter vehemence of wrath;  
Nor yet thy wrongs forget.  
Time is a god who blunts the edge of woe.  
Since nor on Crisa's pastured shore  
Delays the martial son  
Of Agamemnon, never to return,  
Nor the stern God who rules in Acheron.

*Elec.* Yet of mine earthly date long space hath  
passed  
In hope, vain hope, nor can I yet endure,  
Who pine in orphan wretchedness,  
Whom no kind friend with manly might upholds.

Scorned like some foreign slave, despised I tread  
 The palace of my fathers, in the garb  
 Of servitude arrayed,  
 With scanty food sustained.

## STROPHE III.

*Ch.* Sad was indeed the voice of his return,  
 Sad in thy father's halls the groan,  
 When from the brazen axe unsparing fell  
 The adverse blow of death.—  
 'Twas <sup>o</sup>falsehood prompted, lust fulfilled the deed.  
 A deed of horror, fearfully conceived,  
 Whether a God these acts of darkness wrought,  
 Or one of mortal race !

*Elec.* O day, of all that ever shone  
 Most hateful to my soul!  
 O night, O traitorous banquet, fraught to me  
 With deep unutterable woes,  
 When my unhappy sire  
 Met from two murderous hands th' inglorious death;

---

<sup>o</sup> Ægisthus and Clytemnestra are said to have watched Agamemnon, as he came out of the bath, when they threw over his head a shirt without any opening at the neck; entangled in this they murdered him; thus was the scheme laid by falsehood and treachery, and executed by lust.—Francklin.



Those hands my life betrayed,  
 Those hands my ruin wrought.  
 May He who reigns on high Olympus' brow,  
 With equal woes that deed of death repay ;  
 Never may joy and peace accordant smile  
 On those who dared the crime.

## ANTISTROPHE III.

*Ch.* Bethink thee yet, nor still indulge thy wrath.  
 Hast thou no thought, from what a height  
 Already hast thou fallen into woes  
 Shameful as undeserved ?  
 Thou dost but heap fresh insult on thy head,  
 Raising by thine inexorable hate  
 Continual strife. This contest with the strong,—  
 It cannot tend to good.

*Elec.* By woes, stern woes am I constrained ;  
 The frenzy of my wrath  
 I know, I feel—yet, maddening in my grief,  
 I will not curb my plaints  
 While life yet warms my breast !  
 What, O beloved friends, what lenient word  
 Of hope can soothe me now,  
 From whom that seeks my weal ?  
 Cease then, your unavailing comforts cease,

For never, never shall my woes be hushed!  
And never shall I rest from misery,—  
Eternal is my grief.

## EPODE.

*Ch.* Yet do I speak with fond regard,  
Fond as a mother's anxious love,  
That thus thou heap not woes on woes!

*Elec.* What is the measure of my wretchedness?  
How should a generous heart neglect the dead?  
By whom of men are thoughts like these indulged?  
O ne'er from such be honour mine,—  
Ne'er, should I wed the worthiest of mankind,  
Could I in peace repose, dishonouring thus  
My much-loved sire, or cease the frantic flight  
Of shrill-resounding groans;  
For if the dull earth cover thus the blood  
Of him who basely died,  
And they who wrought his fall,  
Repay not life for life;  
Then perish shame for aye,  
And piety be banished from mankind!

*Ch.* I came, my daughter, anxious to promote  
Thy welfare and mine own,—but if I err  
Do thou prevail, and be it mine to follow.

---

*Elec.* I blush, O friends, if from my ceaseless groans  
You deem me conquered by excess of grief;  
Yet, since by stern necessity constrained,  
Forgive me. How, from lofty lineage sprung,  
How could a woman curb her flowing tears,  
A father's wrongs beholding,—which by day,  
By night, are ever present to my soul,  
And all fresh-springing rather than decayed.  
First from my mother, her who gave me birth,  
My heaviest wrongs arise;—then in these halls,  
Mine own ancestral halls, must I perforce  
Consort with those who shed my father's blood,  
And yield a forced obedience, since by them  
My various wants are slighted or supplied.  
Think, too, what days of agony are mine,  
When on my father's seat enthroned I view  
The wretch Ægisthus;—see him proudly wear  
My father's robes of empire, and insult  
The Gods with foul libations on that hearth  
Which erst he sprinkled with my Father's blood.  
And this, the last and most revolting wrong,  
I see th' assassin share my Father's couch  
With my abandoned mother, if to her  
I still can give a mother's hallowed name.  
Such is her bold presumption, with that wretch,

That blood-stained villain, undismayed she lives  
 By the avenging Furies unappalled.  
 But, as in mockery of that deed of death,  
 Still when the day revolves on which she slew  
 My hapless father by perfidious wiles,  
 She leads the jocund dance, and to the Gods,  
 Her guardian Gods, the votive victim slays.  
 While I, unhappy! forced to witness all,  
 Weep—waste away,—and evermore bewail  
 Th' ill-omened ' feast that bears my father's name.  
 Yet vent my griefs alone: I dare not else  
 Indulge the mournful luxury of tears.  
 For thus my mother, bold at least in words,  
 Pursues me ever with upbraidings keen.  
 “ Wretch—hateful to the Gods! to thee alone  
 Is then thy father dead? Of all mankind  
 Doth none deplore his doom, save only thou?  
 Ill fate be thine, nor may th' infernal Gods  
 E'er grant thee freedom from thy present woes.”

---

' Clytemnestra, in imitation of the solemn honours paid to the gods and heroes on the new moons, called, therefore, *ἡμηναια*, instituted a monthly festival, with sacrifices to the Gods, her preservers, on the day on which Agamemnon was murdered. This was celebrated with songs and dances, and a feast insolently called *Epulæ Agamemnoniæ*.—Potter.

Thus she upbraids me;—and if one remark,  
Orestes will return, infuriate then  
She cries aloud—“And art not thou the cause,  
And is not this thy deed, who from my care  
Didst steal and bear away the young Orestes?  
Yet know at least due recompense awaits thee.”  
Thus doth she rave, and comes to fire her wrath  
Her truly noble and most valiant husband,  
That nerveless dastard, that reproach of man,  
Who fights his battles with a woman’s aid.  
While I, awaiting my Orestes still,  
To end my woes, in vain impatience pine.  
He meditates the deed, but nought achieves,  
Blighting my present as my future hopes.  
In such a lot, my friends, how hard to keep  
A meek and temperate prudence. Plunged in ills,  
Fain must we be subservient to our doom.

*Ch.* Say, while thou breath’st these words, where  
is Ægisthus?

Is he within, or hath he left his home?

*Elec.* He is far distant; were my tyrant near  
I could not thus beyond the portals range.  
He now is in the country.

*Ch.* Then indeed,  
With more assurance can we here indulge

An open converse.

*Elec.* Since he is afar  
Ask boldly what thou wilt.

*Ch.* First would I seek  
What tidings of thy brother,—will he come,  
Or doth he linger yet?—I long to know.

*Elec.* He talks, but does not prove his words by  
action.

*Ch.* Oft do men linger in a bold emprize.

*Elec.* I did not linger when I saved his life.

*Ch.* Cheer thee; right noble is thy brother's soul,  
And prompt to aid his friends.

*Elec.* I trust it is,  
Or had not borne the load of life so long.

*Ch.* Hush! say no more,—without the palace  
gates.

I see thy sister, fair <sup>8</sup> Chrysothemis,

<sup>8</sup> Chrysothemis is mentioned by Homer, *Il.* ix.

Yet more, three daughters in his court are bred,  
And each well worthy of a royal bed;  
Laodice and Iphigenia fair,  
And bright Chrysothemis with golden hair.

Iphianassa is in the original, and ought to have been in the translation, as Iphigenia was supposed to have been immolated at Aulis. Laodice is, in all probability, the same with *Electra*.

Of the same parents born ; lo ! in her hands  
She bears the funeral offerings to the dead.

[*Enter* CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Chry.* What converse, sister, art thou holding  
here,

Beyond the portal ranging thus at large ?  
Wilt thou not yet from sad experience learn  
To curb this wild and unavailing wrath ?  
I too am conscious of indignant grief  
For these our present wrongs, and had I power  
Would prove what feelings to our foes I bear.  
Now, plunged in miseries, better furl our sails  
Nor dream of vengeance where we cannot wound.  
O could I win thee thus with me to act—  
Though what I speak, not that is right alone,  
But what thou judgest. Would I live as fits  
The free, I must obey my Lords in all.

*Elec.* At least 'tis shame, of such a father born,  
Thus to forget him, and subservient court  
A guilty mother's favour. Well I know

These admonitions all are taught by her,  
And not the dictates of thine own free thought.  
Choose then whiche'er thou wilt—to be unwise,  
Or in thy wisdom to forget thy friends ;  
Thou who didst late affirm, if strength were thine,  
Of these thy just abhorrence thou would'st prove,  
Yet aid'st me not, but dost impede the act.  
Say, adds not this to wretchedness the shame  
Of cowardice? Teach thou, or learn from me  
What it could profit to forbear my tears.  
Do not I live? In misery, I confess,  
Yet this for me sufficeth. When I pay  
Due honours to the dead—if there be aught  
Of pleasure in those honours, *they* are grieved ;  
Thou dost but hate them with the hate of words,  
Aiding in acts the murderers of thy Sire.  
But never, never, though the gifts that grace  
Thy happier lot, were proffered to my need  
Would I submit to them. Let the rich board  
Be spread for thee—and plenty flow around—  
This be my only sustenance—that I live  
To gall their hearts. Their honours I disdain,  
Nor wouldst thou prize them, wert thou truly wise.  
Now, when thou mightst have borne thy Father's  
name,



Noblest of men, be called thy mother's child.  
For thus to all shalt thou appear most base,  
False to thy murdered Father, and thy friends.

*Ch.* Nought, by the Gods, in anger:—wouldst  
thou stoop

To learn from her, and she in turn from thee,  
The words of both might tend perchance to good.

*Chry.* To words like these, my friends, am I inured,  
Nor to her memory had I e'er recalled  
The subject—but of coming ills I heard,  
Which soon will hush her long laments for ever.

*Elec.* Speak then this weighty evil—if thou  
name

One that can gall more deeply than the wrongs  
Which now I suffer—I oppose no more.

*Chry.* Nay, I will truly tell thee all I know.  
Unless thou cease thy wailings, they design  
To send thee hence where never shalt thou see  
The sun's glad light—but,<sup>9</sup> shut in dreary cell

---

<sup>9</sup> The resemblance between this menace and the punishment inflicted upon Antigone, will forcibly strike the reader; as will also the coincidence between the sentiments of the different parties,—Electra and Chrysothemis being the exact counterparts of Antigone and Ismene.

Far from this land, shalt pour thy dirge, of woe.  
Reflect thou then—nor when in miseries, plunged  
Upbraid thy sister. Thou mayst yet be wise.

*Elec.* What—is this doom, in truth decreed for me?

*Chry.* Soon as Ægisthus to his home returns.

*Elec.* For this at least may he return with speed.

*Chry.* Why, O unhappy, on thine own rash head  
Thus imprecate destruction?

*Elec.* Let him come

If deed like this, indeed, he meditate.

*Chry.* That thou may'st feel new miseries? Dost  
thou rave?

*Elec.* That far away I may escape from you.

*Chry.* Hast thou no thought for life?

*Elec.* A life is mine

So blest, it well may win thee to admire!

*Chry.* Blest it might be, if thou wouldst yield  
to wisdom.

*Elec.* Instruct not me to wrong the friends I  
honour.

*Chry.* I would but teach submission to the  
mighty.

*Elec.* Be such base flattery thine. I am not  
formed

For aught so abject.

*Chry.* Yet 'twere well at least  
If we must perish, not to fall through rashness.

*Elec.* Nay, we will fall, if we must fall indeed,  
Our Father's doom avenging.

*Chry.* But in this  
Our sire will grant forgiveness to his children.

*Elec.* To praise thy counsels were a dastard's  
part.

*Chry.* Wilt thou not hear my reasonings nor  
assent?

*Elec.* No. May I never be thus lost to wisdom.

*Chry.* Then will I hence, mine errand to fulfil.

*Elec.* What errand—whither dost thou bear those  
off'rings?

*Chry.* My mother sends me at my father's tomb  
To make the due libations.

*Elec.* What—to him  
Of all mankind her most detested foe?

*Chry.* And whom she murdered, since thou'lt  
have me say so.

*Elec.* By whom persuaded? who hath counselled  
this?

*Chry.* From some nocturnal vision, as I deem.

*Elec.* O my ancestral Gods, aid, aid me now!

*Chry.* Hast thou then aught of hope from these  
her terrors?

*Elec.* Wouldst thou relate the vision, I could tell  
thee.

*Chry.* Scant information can I give thee here.

*Elec.* Tell all thou canst. Oft light and trivial  
words

Have ruined mortals, or to greatness raised them.

*Chry.* 'Tis rumoured that she<sup>10</sup> saw thy sire and  
mine

Present again before her, from the tomb  
To life ascending—then in earth he fixed  
The ancient sceptre, which of old he bore  
And now Ægisthus bears, and from its top  
Sprouted a vigorous scion, which increased  
Till its broad shade o'er all Mycenæ spread.  
I heard her thus relating when she told  
Her dubious vision to the radiant Sun.  
But more than this I know not, save that urged  
By anxious dread, she sends me to the tomb.  
I now conjure thee by our country's Gods,

---

<sup>10</sup> The idea of this dream is borrowed from the *Chœphoræ* of Æschylus, where Clytemnestra dreams that she was brought to bed of a dragon, to whom she gives suck, and who draws out all her blood.

Yield to my prayers, nor fall by utter rashness ;—  
If thou repel me now, when all too late  
Involved in misery thou wilt seek mine aid.

*Elec.* Nay, dearest sister! of these offerings  
nought

Present thou at the tomb. It is not just,  
It is not pious from that woman-fiend  
To bear funereal honours, and to pour  
Libations to my father. Cast them forth  
To the wild winds, or hide them in the dust,  
Deep—deep—that never to my Father's tomb  
Th' accursed thing may reach—but when she dies  
Lie hid in earth to grace her sepulchre.  
For had she not been formed of all her sex  
The most abandoned, never had she' crowned  
These loathed libations to the man she slew.  
Thinkst thou the dead entombed could e'er receive,  
In friendly mood, such obsequies from her  
By whom he fell dishonoured, like a foe—

---

\* Brunck, on the authority of Virgil, (*Sanguinis et sacri pateras*,) seems to imagine that these libations were necessarily accompanied with the blood of a slain victim. It appears, however, Eur. Orest. 115, that honey, milk, and wine, only were offered.

While on her mangled victim's<sup>a</sup> head she wiped  
His blood for expiation? Think'st thou then  
These empty rites can for such guilt atone?  
O no! leave this vain errand unfulfilled—  
Cut from thy head th' extremest curls—and take  
From mine these locks—though scanty—yet the best  
I have—to him present this votive<sup>b</sup> hair,  
And this my zone, unwrought with regal pomp.  
Kneel too—and pray, that he would soon arise  
To aid his children 'gainst their deadly foes;  
And that Orestes with more vigorous hand  
May live, and dash his enemies to earth,  
That henceforth we may crown his honoured tomb  
With costlier offerings than we now present.  
I think, I trust, at length he marks our woes,

---

<sup>a</sup> The murderer of any person, among the Ancients, was accustomed to wipe the sword, or other instrument of murder, on the hair of the deceased, and then to wash it; concluding that this process would wipe away the guilt also.

<sup>b</sup> The hair was an offering usually dedicated to the dead. Thus Canace, in Ovid, regrets that she was not permitted to adorn her lover's tomb with her locks. The same custom appears to have prevailed among the eastern nations. Compare Ezek. xxvii. 31.

And hence affrights her with these fearful dreams.  
Now, O my sister, aid thyself and me,  
Aid him, the best and dearest of mankind,  
Our common Father, resting in the grave.

*Ch.* The virgin's words are pious. Thou,  
beloved,

If thou art wise, her bidding wilt perform.

*Chry.* I will—no plea the righteous deed affords  
For two to question, but at once to act.  
But of the deed I purpose, by the Gods !  
O friends beloved, unbroken silence keep,  
Since, should it reach my mother, I should meet  
A bitter guerdon for the bold attempt.

[*Exit* CHRYSOTHEMIS.]

*Chorus.*

STROPHE.

If true prophetic skill be mine,  
If aught of wisdom's ray divine ;  
Soon shall Avenging Justice here  
Her own dread harbinger appear—  
With hand of might, and threatening brow  
She cannot, will not linger now ;

But soon, my daughter, shall pursue  
The track of guilt, and punish too !  
So from this joy-awakening dream  
In confidence I fondly deem.  
At least the King of Greece, thy Sire,  
Oblivion ne'er shall know ;—  
That ancient axe, a weapon dire  
Which laid the Monarch low  
Mid scorn and insult to expire,  
Shall ne'er forget the blow !

## ANTISTROPHE.

With many a foot of matchless speed,  
With many a hand of deadly deed,  
Erinnys, veiled in ambush now,  
With brazen tread shall track the foe.  
Aye, she hath marked the lawless tie,  
The bond of nuptial infamy—  
Plighted in blood—by right unblest—  
And hence forebodes my prescient breast  
That ne'er shall this portentous sign  
Pass, unfulfilled by wrath divine,  
On those who wrought—who shared the shame.—  
No faith shall man repose  
On visions which in darkness came,



Or fates the Gods disclose,  
Unless this nightly dream proclaim  
A limit to our woes.

## EPODE.

O race, with countless labours fraught,  
By Pelops won in olden time,  
What wide affliction hast thou wrought  
To this devoted clime.  
Since † Myrtilus in ocean deep  
Was headlong hurled to Death's cold sleep,  
Hurled from his radiant car of gold,  
With insult fierce and uncontrouled ;

---

† Myrtilus was charioteer to CEnomaus, the father of Hippodamia. Having been warned, by an oracle, to beware of a son-in-law, he refused to give his daughter in marriage to any but one who could vanquish him in a chariot-race. Death was the penalty of failure. Thirteen chiefs had already perished, when Pelops, having gained over Myrtilus, entered the lists and became victor, the charioteer of CEnomaus having treacherously provided his master with an old chariot, which broke down in the course. When, however, Myrtilus came to demand the reward of his perfidy, Pelops threw him headlong into the sea; whence Mercury, the father of Myrtilus, revenged the death of his son upon the descendants of Pelops.

Nor woe hath passed, nor dire disgrace  
Unfelt by this devoted race!

*Enter* CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Cly.* Again it seems, thou dar'st to roam at large,  
He who was wont to check thee—lest abroad  
Thou shame thy friends—Ægisthus is not here ;  
Nor in his absence dost thou aught regard  
My will. Unnumbered calumnies are breathed  
By thee to every ear, that I am lost  
To shame, and pass beyond the bounds of right,  
To thee and thine injurious. I, in sooth,  
Am slow to outrage, and the taunts I breathe  
Are but an answer to thine own reproaches.—  
Thy plea is still thy Father, and nought else,  
Murdered by me. By me? I own the deed,  
Nor would I seek to disavow the charge.  
'Twas Justice struck the blow, not I alone,  
Whom duty calls thee, wert thou wise, to aid:—  
This Father, whom thy ceaseless tears lament,  
Alone of Greeks could brook to immolate

Thy sister to the Gods—as if the pangs  
Of travail had been his, as they were mine.  
Enough of this.—And tell me for whose weal  
He slew my daughter—wilt thou say for Greece?  
No claim had Greece to slay my guiltless child.  
Was it for Meneläus? yet if thus  
He slew my daughter for his brother's sake,  
Should I not claim requital for her blood?  
Did not 'two children call the Spartan sire,  
For whom to perish first was doubly meet,  
From parents sprung who both had caused the war?  
And did remorseless Death desire to feed  
On my poor child, and not on Helen's too?  
Or was their hated Father's love extinct  
To his own offspring, and were natural ties  
Dear but to Meneläus?—Were not these  
Acts of a senseless and abandoned parent?  
Such are my thoughts, though far removed from  
thine.  
Such, could she speak them, were my murdered  
daughter's.

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<sup>5</sup> Hesiod says that, besides Hermione, Menelaus had a son, named Nicostratus, by Helena. Sophocles availed himself of this authority.—Potter.

Nought do I then repent me of the deed;  
And, if my actions seem unwise to thee,  
Thy just resolve maintaining, blame thy friends.

*Elec.* At least, thou wilt not now affirm that I  
By words of insult challenged keen retort;  
But, if thou sanction, I at once would speak  
In my dead father's and my sister's cause.

*Cly.* Take then my sanction—hadst thou ever  
thus  
Begun thy speech, I had not shrunk to hear thee.

*Elec.* Then will I speak. Thou freely hast  
avowed  
My father's murder. What avowal then  
Could be than this more shameful, whether made  
With justice, or without it? I will prove  
At least thou didst not strike the blow from justice  
But smooth persuasion of that impious wretch  
With whom thou now consortest, led thee on.  
Ask now the huntress Dian, for what crime  
At Aulis she detained the Grecian host;  
Or I will tell thee, since thou canst not ask  
Of the chaste goddess. When, as I have heard,  
My sire was sporting in her sacred grove,  
He from its covert roused a dappled stag,  
Stately with branching horns, and slew the prey,

With vaunting words exulting. Hence incensed,  
Long did Latona's virgin child detain  
Th' assembled Argives, till my sire should pay  
His child a ransom for the slaughtered stag.  
Such was the sacrifice—for else the host  
Homeward, or e'en to Ilion, ne'er had sailed.  
Constrained, and much resisting, scarce he brooked  
To offer her—and not for Meneläus.—  
Nay—for I state thy plea—if he but wished  
To serve and aid his brother by the deed,  
Was it thy part to slay him? By what law?  
Beware, such laws ordaining to mankind,  
Lest to thyself just vengeance thou ordain  
And late remorse. If blood cry out for blood,  
Thou then shouldst be the first to perish.—Thou,  
If the due guerdon of thy crimes were paid.  
Beware, nor urge such unavailing plea.  
Tell, if thou wilt, requiting what misdeed  
Thou now art working acts of foulest shame,  
With a base wretch consorting, by whose aid  
Thy guilty hand achieved my father's fall,  
And bear'st him children, thrusting from thy house  
The virtuous offspring of a virtuous line?  
How could I vindicate such deeds? Or still  
Wilt thou allege this vengeance, too, thou tak'st

For thy slain daughter? Shameless were the word,  
E'en shouldst thou speak it—'tis not well to wed  
An enemy, though for a daughter's sake.

But here I may not even dare advise thee,  
For thou dost straight upbraid me with the crime  
Of slander 'gainst my mother—yet, be sure,  
Naught save a haughty mistress do I deem thee.  
No mother's heart is thine to me, who spend  
A weary life of never-ceasing woes ;  
By thee inflicted—and thy paramour ;  
While he afar, scarce rescued from thy rage,  
Orestes, lingers on his joyless date,  
Whom oft thou dost accuse me to have nursed  
Thy future murderer. Had the power been mine,  
Ere this, know well, the deed had been performed.  
Go, then, and for these words to all proclaim me  
Abandoned—slandorous—insolent of speech—  
O'ercharged with bold presumption. If my mind  
Is formed by Nature to such shameless deeds,  
My mother need not blush to own her child.

*Ch.* I see her breathing rage—but if her ire  
Be just, I ween, awakes but slight regard.

*Cly.* And what regard can she at least demand  
Who thus insults a mother, and that too

At<sup>6</sup> such an age? Seems she not well prepared  
To dare the vilest deeds without a blush?

*Elec.* Yet know, e'en now I blush, although to  
thee

I seem not—for I feel how ill such deeds  
Befit my nature and become my birth!  
But thine inveterate hate and shameless crimes  
Constrain me, though reluctant, thus to act;  
For deeds of baseness by the base are taught.

*Cly.* <sup>7</sup> Insolent wretch—do I, my words or deeds,  
Constrain thee thus reproachfully to speak?

*Elec.* Thine the reproach—not mine—for thine  
the deed.

No marvel deeds should find congenial words.

*Cly.* So Artemis, my tutelary Power,

<sup>6</sup> At such an age. Does this allude to her extreme youth, or maturer age? Though the context seems to favour the former supposition, the latter appears more consistent with the probable age of Electra, which, as we have already observed on Brunck's authority, could not be *less* than twenty-five, according to Sophocles; while according to Æschylus and Euripides, she must have been at least ten years older.

<sup>7</sup> *Θεῖον ἀναιδὲς—θρίμμα.* Animal—quicquid alitur,—generally used in a bad sense. Blomfield.

Preserve me, as thou meet'st a due reward  
When home returns Ægisthus.

*Elec.* Dost thou see?

Rage bears thee onward, though thou badst me speak  
Whate'er I would, nor know'st thou how to listen.

*Cly.* Wilt thou not cease thy wild<sup>s</sup> ill-boding cries,  
While to the Gods these offerings I present,  
Since I at least allowed thee to speak all?

*Elec.* I suffer—I exhort thee—pay thy vows;  
Nor still persist to censure thus my words,  
For I will say no more.

*Cly.* Thou on our rites  
Attendant, of all fruits oblations bring,  
That to this King due homage I may pay,  
To chase the terrors that distract my soul.  
O Tutelary Phœbus, hear my prayer—  
My secret prayer—for not among my friends  
My speech is made—nor be in every ear  
The cause divulged, which hither leads me now—  
Lest in malignant hate with clamorous spleen

---

<sup>s</sup> The Ancients carried their superstition to such an excess, as to regard, in the light of a fatal presage, whatever they heard, either mournful or displeasing, during their sacrifices. Hence the expression “*Favete linguis.*”—Brumoy.



She through the city breathe a slanderous tale.  
But hear me thus, for I will thus address thee.  
This night in visions of my bed I saw  
A dream of two-fold import—if it be  
Propitious, grant me then, Lycæan King,  
To hail its glad fulfilment—if 'tis fraught  
With evils, let them on my foes recoil.  
If secret treachery plots to hurl me down  
From present bliss, O blast the false design,  
And grant me still, in prosperous peace serene,  
To guide the house and sway the sceptre proud  
Of the Atridæ, circled with the friends  
Whose converse now delights me—and with those  
Of mine own offspring, who, with friendly mind,  
Nor seek my downfall nor conspire my woe.  
Lycæan Phœbus, hear with favouring mind,  
And grant the blessings which our vows implore.  
What still remains unsaid, though I be mute  
Is known, I deem, to thee, a potent God :—  
Nought can be hidden from the race of Jove.

*Enter ATTENDANT.*

ATTENDANT, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Att.* How, O ye strangers, can I surely learn,  
If these are King Ægisthus' royal halls.

*Ch.* They are, O stranger.—Thou hast rightly  
guessed.

*Att.* And rightly deem I this his royal spouse?  
Her form and aspect well become a Queen.

*Ch.* Here too thou hast guessed rightly. 'Tis herself.

*Att.* Hail, Queen! To thine Ægisthus and to thee  
News of glad import from a friend I bear.

*Cly.* I hail the omen, but would first demand  
Who sent thee hither?

*Att.* Phanoteus of Phocis,  
Charged with important tidings.

*Cly.* What, O stranger?  
True was the friend by whom thou wert de-  
spatched ;—

Thy words, I doubt not, will be friendly too.

*Att.* I speak in brief—Orestes is no more.

*Elec.* Ah wretched me—This day I perish too!

*Cly.* What say'st, what say'st thou, stranger?

Heed her not.

*Att.* I told and tell thee of Orestes' death.

*Elec.* Then am I lost. I too am nothing now.

*Cly.* Look thou to what concerns thee.—Thou,  
O Stranger,

Inform me truly by what means he perished?

*Att.* For this I came, and will relate the whole.  
When to the noblest pageant of all Greece  
The contest for the Delphian prize, he came,  
Soon as he heard the herald's voice aloud  
Proclaim the race which ushers in the strife,  
Bright he stood forth, by all applauded there.  
Scarce seemed the starting-post — so swift his  
course—

At distance from the goal ; and victor there  
He won th' all-honoured prize. But to compress  
In few brief words a long and copious tale,  
Such acts of might in man I never knew.  
Be this the proof—in all th' accustomed games<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Πεντάθλια—The Πένταθλον, or Quinquertium, consisted of the five games mentioned in the following verse,—

Ἄλμα, ποδωκίην, δίσκοι ἄκοντα, πάλην.

Viz. leaping, racing, throwing, darting, wrestling. It may be proper to notice that the Pythian games were not instituted in the age of Orestes. It is said that as often as this play was represented, the Athenians murmured at this anachronism. Yet they suffered it to remain.—The δαυλος here mentioned was when the competitors in the foot-race ran back again to the place from whence they first set out.

To him the umpires gave the conquering crown,  
And every wreath his single brow adorned :  
Thrice happy then the youth was hailed by all,  
When through the host he was proclaimed an Argive,  
By name Orestes—Agamemnon's son—  
Who roused to war th' embattled power of Greece.  
Such was his state—but when the Gods withstand,  
No man, though mighty, can escape his doom.  
On the next morn; when, with the rising sun,  
Began the contest of the winged steeds,  
With many practised in the chariot-course,  
The lists he entered. An Achæan one,  
And one from Sparta ; skilled with dextrous hand,  
To guide the car, two Lybians next stood forth—  
Fifth young Orestes to the contest cheered  
His fleet Thessalian mares—the sixth rushed on  
With chestnut coursers from Ætolia's land—  
The seventh Magnesia sent;—with steeds as white  
As spotless snow, the eighth from Æenia came—  
From God-erected Athens was the ninth—  
And the tenth chariot a Bœotian filled.  
Standing where chosen umpires of the strife  
Assigned each station, all arranged their cars ;  
Then at the signal-trumpet bounding forth  
Each roused at once his coursers, in his hand

Shaking the reins, and straight the course was filled  
With the hoarse echo of the rattling cars—  
The dust was tossed on high—commingling there  
In wild confusion, none restrained the lash,  
Each ardent to surpass the rolling wheels,  
And snorting coursers of the rival band—  
For on their backs and swift revolving wheels  
Were the hot breathings of the fiery steeds.  
He, to the<sup>10</sup> utmost column keeping close,  
Still drew his axle nigh, and giving rein  
To the right steed, held in the nearer horse.  
All had as yet maintained their course aright,  
But then the Ænian's strong and restive steeds  
Whirl off his chariot, and in turning now,  
The sixth course finished and the seventh com-  
menced,  
Dash their fronts headlong on the Libyan car.  
Then the mischance of one impelled the rest

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<sup>10</sup> The chariot-race was not always of the same length—it consisted at different times of four, seven, eight, or twelve courses or rounds. Mr. West fixes this, in which Orestes is said to have contended, at eight. At each round great skill and dexterity was shown in turning the last pillar, the *τέγμα*: this was done by drawing in the reins of the near horse, and giving the other free scope.—Potter.

Each on his fellow ; broke th' encountering cars,  
 And strewed their fragments far o'er Crissa's plain.  
 This when th' Athenian saw, with skilful hand  
 He turned without the wreck—and slacked his speed  
 Till, wheeling round, he left it in the midst.  
 Last came Orestes, urging in the rear  
 His steeds, less swift, yet trusting in the end.  
 He, when he saw his rival left alone,  
 Sounding the shrill scourge o'er his flying<sup>1</sup> mares  
 Pursues him onward, and in equal line  
 They sped their course, now one, the other now  
 Each urging forward still his horses' heads.  
 And all the other courses safely drove  
 Th' unhappy, standing in his car erect—  
 When, of his wheeling courser slackening now  
 The leftward rein, upon the pillar's edge  
 Unwarily he struck—while by the shock

<sup>1</sup> Fleet horses are generally spoken of by the Ancient poets in the feminine gender, πάλους Ἐπιτάς—Hipp. So Virgil—

Eliadum palmas Epiros equarum.

Georg. i. 59.

Ἴπποι μὲν μέγ' ἀριστοὶ ἴσαι Φηητιάδαο  
 Τὰς Ἐυμηλὸς ἔλαυνε—

Hom. Il. ii. 763.

Midway his axle broke, and from his car  
 Entangled<sup>2</sup> in the reins, the youth is hurled,  
 While his impatient steeds, now unrestrained  
 O'er the mid course their hapless master bore.  
 Soon as th' assembly marked him from his car  
 O'erthrown, with general cries they mourned the  
                   youth,

What glorious deeds—what sad reverse were his,  
 Thus whirled on earth, and upward then again,  
 Tossing his limbs to heaven.—The charioteers,  
 Who scarce could check the fiery coursers' speed,  
 Loosed him, so torn and bleeding, that his friends  
 Could scarce have recognized his mangled frame.  
 And on the pyre they burn him—and the dust  
 Of one so mighty in a little urn  
 The chosen heralds of the Phocians bear,  
 Here to entomb him in his father-land.  
 Such is my tale, affecting to relate,  
<sup>3</sup> But to the sad spectators, of all woes

<sup>2</sup> Τμητοῖς ἵμασι. Cf. Hipp. (Monk,) 1240.

<sup>3</sup> In like manner the Messenger in Œdip. Tyr.

Of these dark deeds  
 The worst is latent, since no eye beheld  
 Its horrors.—

They e'er beheld, the heaviest and the worst.

*Ch.* Alas, alas! e'en from its root the race  
Of my time-honoured Lords seems withering now.

*Cly.* Great Jove! what news are these? Call I  
them glad,

Or grievous, though most gainful? I must mourn  
By mine own evils to preserve my life.

*Att.* Why art thou pensive, Lady, at my tale?

*Cly.* 'Tis much to be a mother;—deeply wronged,  
A mother slowly learns to hate her children!

*Att.* Then, as it seems, we are but come in vain.

*Cly.* Nay; not in vain; how could'st thou speak  
in vain,

If charged with certain tokens of *his* death?

Who, though I gave him birth, yet, far estranged  
From my maternal breast and fostering care,

Hath dwelt, an exile in a foreign clime;

Nor, since he left this land, hath e'er beheld

His mother; but, still laying to my charge

His father's murder, threatened dire revenge;

Hence, nor by night nor day did sleep serene

O'ershade mine eyes, but Time's unvarying round

For ever led me on as doomed to death.

Now, (since to-day from terror I am freed,

I dread nor him nor her, for she hath been



My heavier curse, who, dwelling in my house,  
For ever drains my life-blood warm and pure,)  
Now shall we spend our future days in peace,  
Unvexed, at least, by her unheeded threats.

*Elec.* Wretch that I am! I now, indeed, have cause  
To wail thy doom, Orestes, my beloved,  
Thus fallen, and by a mother outraged thus!  
Is this well done?

*Cly.* Not well, in sooth, for thee;—  
For him, the doom he met became him well.

*Elec.* Hear, thou avenger of the recent dead,  
Hear, Nemesis!

*Cly.* Already hath she heard  
Whom first she ought, and well fulfilled the prayer.

*Elec.* Aye, vaunt, for thou art Fortune's minion  
now.

*Cly.* Henceforth nor thou, nor thine Orestes  
more,  
Subvert our peace.

*Elec.* Alas! ourselves undone,  
We have no power to compass thine undoing.

*Cly.* Worthy of rich reward hadst thou arrived  
O stranger, hadst thou checked her clamorous  
tongue.

*Att.* Then will I hence depart, if this be well.

*Cly.* Nay, go not thus : unworthy 'twere of us,  
Unworthy of the faithful friend who sent thee.  
But enter ye, and leave her here without  
To mourn her friends' afflictions, and her own.

[*Exeunt* CLYTEMNESTRA and ATTENDANT.

## ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Elec.* Did that unnatural mother seem to feel  
One pang, to shed one tear, or heave a sigh  
O'er her lost son,—so soon, so sadly lost?  
She passed within deriding! Wretched me!  
Orestes! dear Orestes! by thy death  
Thou hast undone me,—thou hast torn away  
My last and only hope—that thou would'st come  
In life, Avenger of thy father's blood,  
And of thy sister's tears!—but whither now  
Can I betake me? I am desolate;  
Of brother and of father both bereft.  
Henceforth, in bitterest bondage must I serve  
Those, whom of all mankind I most abhor,  
My father's murderers. And can this be well?  
O never, never, while I yet survive  
Will I with these consort, but at this gate,

Prostrate and friendless, waste my life away.  
If this offend the hated foes within,  
Then let them slay me,—joy it were to die,  
For life is woe, and I would live no more.

## STROPHE I.

*Ch.* <sup>4</sup> Where are the vengeful bolts of Jove,  
Or where the beaming sun,  
If deeds like these beholding, still  
Such deeds they calmly hide?

*Elec.* Ah me! alas! alas!

*Ch.* Wherefore, my friend, thus wildly weep?

*Elec.* Woe! woe!

*Ch.* Nay, do not feed this wild excess of  
grief.

*Elec.* Alas! thou wilt destroy me!

*Ch.* Wherefore thus?

*Elec.* If thou dost talk of idle hopes  
For those, whose dwelling is the dreary grave;

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<sup>4</sup> There is some discussion whether these lines are to be attributed to Electra or to the Chorus. "The reflection," observes Francklin, "comes naturally from the Chorus:"—and though, perhaps, no reason can be assigned why it should come less naturally from Electra, we have followed Erfurdt in attributing it to the Chorus.

To me, by wasting woes consumed,  
Thy solace seems but scorn !

## ANTISTROPHE.

*Ch.* Yet ' King Amphiaraus I knew,  
By golden-wreathed chains  
Of woman was to death ensnared,—  
And now beneath the ground—

*Elec.* Ah ! miserable me !

*Ch.* He reigns immortal evermore.

*Elec.* Alas !

*Ch.* Alas, indeed ! for most destructive she.

*Elec.* She was, at length, requited ?—

*Ch.* Even so.

*Elec.* I know—I know. One rose whose care  
Avenged the Monarch's slaughter ;—but for me  
None, none remains, since he who lived  
Is fled for ever now !

---

' Amphiaraus, being a prophet, and knowing by his art that he should perish at the siege of Thebes, concealed himself, but Eriphyle, his wife, bribed by the present of a necklace, revealed the place of his concealment, and he died as he had foreseen. His death was revenged by his son Alcmaeon, who killed his mother Eriphyle.

## STROPHE II.

*Ch.* Wretched among the comfortless art thou !

*Elec.* Conscious of this, too conscious must I  
be,

In woes so varied, so prolonged,—

In evils dark as hateful plunged !

*Ch.* How true thy complaints, alas ! we know.

*Elec.* Cease, then, ah cease your vain attempt  
To solace,—since no more—

*Ch.* What would'st thou say ?

*Elec.* Since hope no more  
Of succour or of aid can spring  
From mine ancestral line.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

*Ch.* Death is the general doom of all mankind.

*Elec.* What, and must all, like that poor youth,  
In the hot strife of ardent steeds,  
Be in th' entangling reins involved ?

*Ch.* That sad event was unforeseen,

*Elec.* How should it not ? in foreign clime,  
Far from my fostering hand—

*Ch.* Alas !

*Elec.* A narrow urn contains him now,  
Nor hath he found from me or tomb  
Or sad sepulchral dirge!

*Enter* CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Chry.* To thee in joy, beloved, am I come,  
Dismissing cares of dress, for readier speed.  
I bring thee joyous tidings,—hope of rest  
From all the ills thou hast deplored so long.

*Elec.* How shouldst thou bring release from woes  
like mine,  
From which no respite can be found on earth?

*Chry.* Learn, this from me, Orestes is at hand,  
And know it sure as that thine eyes behold me.

*Elec.* Art thou, unhappy, to distraction driv'n,  
That thou dost mock my miseries and thine own?

*Chry.* No; by my father's hearth, I speak not  
thus  
In scorn,—but of his presence well advised.

*Elec.* Me miserable! and who declared to thee  
This welcome tale, that wins thine easy faith?

*Chry.* I learnt it not from strangers ; mine own  
eyes

Beheld the tokens that constrained my credence.

*Elec.* What wakes thy hope, unhappy girl ! what  
sight

Inflames thy soul with this unbounded joy ?

*Chry.* Nay, by the Gods, but hear me ;—when  
my tale

Is told, approve me wise, or call me senseless.

*Elec.* Speak, if the tale can yield thee aught of  
pleasure.

*Chry.* Then will I tell thee all mine eyes have  
seen.

Soon as I reached my Father's ancient tomb,  
Lo ! o'er the mound I saw<sup>6</sup> libations poured  
Of freshly-flowing milk ; and, o'er the tomb,  
A coronal of every flower that blows :  
Astonished at the sight, I gazed around,  
Lest one might steal upon me unobserved.  
When lone and tranquil I perceived the spot,  
Nearer the mound I stole, and o'er the tomb  
I saw some locks of fresh-dissevered hair ;

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<sup>6</sup> Here, again, we find funeral offerings without blood.

While pensively I gazed, full on my soul  
Rushed the familiar fancy that I saw  
Some pledge of him, the dearest of mankind,  
The ever-loved Orestes ! In my hands  
I raised it ; not ill-omened do I deem  
The tears of gladness from mine eyes that fell.  
Full well I know that none could offer there  
These proofs of fond remembrance, save himself :  
To whom, save thee and me, belongs such task ?  
I have not done it ; nor, I know full well,  
Hast thou ; how could'st thou, who may'st never  
leave

These halls unpunished, e'en<sup>7</sup> to serve the Gods ?  
Such deeds were never in my mother's heart  
To do,—nor had she done it undescried.—  
Doubtless, these offerings from Orestes came.  
Hope, then, beloved sister ! not to these  
Shall Fortune ever wear unchanging smiles :  
Our former fates were adverse ; but this dawn  
Shall usher in, perchance, a brighter day.

---

<sup>7</sup> In the religious processions among the Greeks, the virgins, however excluded at other times, bore a conspicuous part ; they walked first, led by some maiden of the highest rank.



*Elec.* Alas, what madness! How I pity thee!

*Chry.* And wherefore? Do my words awake no  
joy?

*Elec.* Thou know'st not whither range thy wan-  
dering thoughts.

*Chry.* How know I not, at least, what mine  
own eyes

Have witnessed?

*Elec.* Wretched sister! he is dead!

Thy hopes from him are vanished; trust no more  
To him for succour.

*Chry.* O unhappy me!

From whom hast thou heard this?

*Elec.* From one who there  
Was present, when he perished.

*Chry.* Where is he?

I marvel at thy words!

*Elec.* Within the house—

Welcome, and not displeasing to my mother.

*Chry.* Ah! woe is me! Yet who, of all man-  
kind,

Could with such offerings grace my father's tomb?

*Elec.* Some stranger hand, I ween, hath offered  
there

The sad memorials of the dead Orestes.

*Chry.* Unhappy me! in what unbounded joy  
I flew to greet thee with the welcome news,  
Of my sad doom unconscious! Here arrived,  
I find my former woes and fresh afflictions.

*Elec.* Such is thy state, indeed; yet list to me,  
And thou shalt lighten this thy weight of woe.

*Chry.* Shall I then raise the dead?

*Elec.* I mean not this  
At least—I was not born thus void of sense.

*Chry.* What bid'st thou then, where I can aught  
avail thee?

*Elec.* That what I counsel thou would'st boldly  
act.

*Chry.* If it can aid us, I will not reject it.

*Elec.* Remember then, without determined toil  
No enterprise can prosper.

*Chry.* This I know;  
And to the task will summon all my powers.

*Elec.* Hear how I purpose to effect the deed.—  
Thou know'st too well no aid is left us now  
From friendly hands;—such Death's unsparing  
might

Hath rent away, and we are left alone.

I, while I heard that still my brother bloomed  
In youth's full vigour, yet indulged a hope

That he would come, Avenger of his sire.  
Since now he is no more, I look to thee,  
That thou, with me, thy sister, wilt not shrink,  
By our own hands, to shed the blood of him  
Who shed our father's blood, the vile Ægisthus.  
It is no season for concealment now.—  
How long wilt thou be slothful?—To what hope  
Of refuge canst thou look?—Thou canst but sigh,  
Reft of thy father's lordly heritage :—  
Thou canst but pine till beauty's vernal bloom  
Decay, unwedded still, and unbeloved ;  
Ne'er canst thou hope the sacred nuptial tie ;  
Thou know'st Ægisthus is not so estranged  
From prudence, as to brook that sons should spring  
From thee or me, to seek his own destruction.  
But, if my prudent counsels thou adopt,  
From thy dead father, from thy brother, too,  
The praise of pious reverence wilt thou win ;  
Then, as in freedom born, wilt thou be styled  
For ever free, with worthy nuptials graced,  
For all are wont to look on generous deeds.  
And seest thou not what never-dying fame,  
If thou accede, will grace thy name and mine ?  
Whoe'er of citizens or strangers gaze  
On us, will greet us with such words as these :—

“ Look on those noble sisters, O my friends,  
“ Who on their foes, though screened by regal power,  
“ Reckless of life repaid a father's death.  
“ These each should love, and these must all revere ;  
“ These in the hallowed feasts and popular throng  
“ All for their manly courage must extol.”

Thus shall the general voice proclaim our praise,  
Alive or dead immortal fame is ours.

Assent, my sister, for thy father's sake,  
For thy loved brother's share the arduous toil ;  
Release me from mine evils, and release  
Thyself with the same blow,—of this assured,  
To live in baseness shames the nobly born.

*Ch.* Much need of caution in a scheme like this  
At once to her who speaks, and her who hears.

*Chry.* Ere thus she spake, O friends, had but  
her mind

Been less distracted, she had well preserved  
That timely caution which she now contemns.  
How couldst thou think in such a wild emprise  
To arm thyself, or call on me to aid thee ?  
Dost thou not see ? A woman, not a man  
Art thou by birth, and weaker than thy foes.  
Daily o'er them benignant Fortune smiles,  
While we decline, and hourly sink to nothing.

Who then can hope 'gainst such a man to plot,  
 Nor on themselves severer miseries draw?  
 Beware, on us lest heavier evils yet  
 Should fall, if any chance to hear thy words.  
 Nought will it aid us, nought avail, if crowned  
 With high renown, in infamy we perish.—  
 To die is not most hateful—but to long  
 For death, while death eludes our baffled grasp.  
 But I conjure thee, ere thou thus persist  
 To tempt our fall, and desolate our race,  
 Repress thy wrath :—All thou hast counselled now  
 A wild ~~un~~meaning frenzy will I deem,  
 And keep in deepest silence. Do but thou  
 From length of time learn wisdom, and be taught,  
 Thyself thus weak, to own superior sway.

*Ch.* Assent. No treasures are to man so rich  
 As cautious forethought, and a prudent mind.

*Elec.* Thy words excite no wonder. Well I knew  
 My proffered counsel thou wouldst wholly spurn.  
 With mine own hand unaided will I strike  
 The blow, nor shall it be at least untried.

*Chry.* Oh had this soul been in thee, when our  
                   sire  
 Was slain—then might'st thou have accomplished all.

*Elec.* Such was at least my nature—but my soul

Was more infirm of purpose.

*Chry.* Through thy life

Be it thy case to cherish such a mood.

*Elec.* Thou counsel'st thus, as purposed not to  
aid me?

*Chry.* Yes—schemes so ill contrived but ill succeed.

*Elec.* I praise thy prudence—for thy dastard fear,  
I feel but hatred.

*Chry.* This I well can bear—  
Hereafter thou wilt praise me.

*Elec.* Ne'er shalt thou  
Win praise, at least from me.

*Chry.* Enough of time  
Is yet remaining to decide that question.

*Elec.* Away—for there is nought of aid in thee.

*Chry.* There is—but thou dost lack a docile  
mind.

*Elec.* Go, and betray my counsels to thy mother.

*Chry.* I do not hate thee with such mortal hatred.

*Elec.* Think then, to what dishonour thou dost  
lead me.

*Chry.* Not to dishonour—to most needful prudence.

*Elec.* What, must I stoop to follow in the track

Of what thou deemest justice?

*Chry.* When thy mind  
Resumes its wiser mood, I'll follow thee.

*Elec.* Wondrous, indeed, that one who speaks  
so well

Should err from wisdom !

*Chry.* Thou hast well described  
Thine own deluded state.

*Elec.* And wherefore so—  
Do I not seem to counsel thus with justice?

*Chry.* Justice itself sometimes may lead to ruin.

*Elec.* I would not deign to live by rules like these.

*Chry.* Yet, if thou dost it, thou wilt praise my  
words.

*Elec.* Yes—I will do it—undismayed by thee.

*Chry.* Art thou resolved—or wilt thou yet reflect?

*Elec.* Than base reflections nought to me more  
hateful.

*Chry.* Methinks thou giv'st no audience to my  
words.

*Elec.* These are no new resolves—nor late con-  
strained  
By recent wrongs.

*Chry.* Then I depart at once ;  
Neither canst thou endure to praise my words,

Nor I approve thy conduct.

*Elec.* Aye, depart ;—

Never again my counsel shalt thou share,  
Though such thy soul desire. 'Tis empty toil  
To seek for shadows where no substance dwells.

*Chry.* If to thyself thy schemes in wisdom framed  
Appear, so think ;—when ills beset thee round  
Too late wilt thou approve my wiser words.

[*Exit* CHRYSOTHEMIS.]

*Chorus.*

STROPHE I.

Why, when we view the feathery tribes of air  
\* Meet sustenance with duteous love provide  
For those who gave them life—whose fostering care  
While yet unfledged, their every want supplied ;—  
Should we from equal piety forbear?  
But no—if Themis reigns on high,  
And Jove's blue lightnings rend the sky,

---

\* This cannot be predicated of birds in general, as the contrary practice is prevalent among them; it must be a particular allusion to the stork.



Ere long shall vengeance crush the guilty pair !  
O Fame, whose voice can pierce the tomb,  
Bear now for me a plaintive cry,  
Down to the grave, in whose perpetual gloom  
With sad dishonour fraught the famed Atreidae lie !

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Say, in their palace wild confusion reigns ;—  
And e'en their children, whom the kindred tie  
Should bind in love, fell discord now restrains  
From intercourse of kindred harmony.  
While sad Electra heaves th' incessant sigh,  
And still, abandoned and alone  
Pours o'er her murdered sire the moan,  
Plaintive as Philomel's wild melody.  
Reckless of death, to life's glad light  
She promptly bids a last farewell,  
So that twin Fury sink to Death's dull night !  
Does not a soul like this her lofty lineage tell ?

## STROPHE II.

Let stern afflictions darkly lower—  
The generous soul recoils from shame,  
Nor strains the honours of its name—  
As thou, my child, in evil hour

Didst nobly choose, with dauntless mind,  
 A life to ceaseless woe consigned ;—  
 Waging with guilt eternal war,  
 That on thine honoured name might rest  
 A double meed—approved by far  
 At once the wisest daughter, and the best.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

Oh mayst thou live in regal might,  
 As much exalted o'er thy foes  
 As now immersed in heavier woes !  
 Since, though from Glory's envied height  
 Plunged deep in ills, I found thee still  
 Spurning a guilty tyrant's will ;—  
 Found, that in every law divine  
 Which blooms with holiest awe above,  
 A stedfast piety was thine—  
 The love of honour, and the fear of Jove.

*Enter ATTENDANT and ORESTES.*

ORESTES, ATTENDANT, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Or.* Inform us, strangers, have we heard aright,

And will this path direct us where we seek ?

*Ch.* What dost thou ask, and whom desire to find ?

*Or.* Long since I asked where King Ægisthus dwells.

*Ch.* Right is thy path, and faithful was the guide.

*Or.* Which then of you will now announce within

The wished arrival of our welcome train ?

*Ch.* If to their race the next in blood allied  
May do thy bidding best, behold her here.

*Or.* Go then within, O lady, and report  
Some strangers, sent from Phocis, seek Ægisthus.

*Elec.* Unhappy me ! they cannot sure arrive  
With certain proofs of all we lately heard ?

*Or.* What thou hast heard I know not—Strophius old,  
Despatched me here with tidings of Orestes.

*Elec.* What tidings, stranger ? How I dread to hear thee !

*Or.* In the brief compass of this narrow urn  
We bear the last sad relics of the dead.

*Elec.* O miserable me ! 'Tis now too plain—  
I see th' undoubted symbols of my woe.

*Or.* If for Orestes these thy tears are shed,

Know, in this vase repose his poor remains.

*Elec.* O give me, stranger, give me, by the Gods,  
If here indeed his relics are enshrined,  
In these sad hands to hold the mournful urn,  
That o'er myself, and all my hapless race  
With these frail ashes I at once may weep.

*Or.* Whoe'er she be, bring forth and give the urn,  
She does not ask it with a hostile mind—  
Some friend perchance, or one of kindred blood.

*Elec.* Memorial dear of all I loved on earth,  
The sole sad relic of Orestes now,  
Ah with what different hopes I sent thee forth,  
And with what grief receive thee! In my hands  
I bear thee—nothing now—yet from these halls,  
I sent thee forth, dear boy! in youth's fair bloom.  
O had I earlier died, ere with these hands  
I stole and sent thee to a foreign land,  
And saved thy life from murder's lifted sword—  
Thou on that day hadst lain a peaceful corpse,  
And shared at least thy father's common tomb.  
Now, far from home, and in a stranger-land,  
Far from thy sister exiled hast thou died,  
Nor my fond hands love's latest task performed,  
Nor bathed thy corpse—nor from the flaming pyre  
Bore thy sad relics, as beseemed me best;

Unhappy, decked by stranger-hands thou com'st,  
 A scanty freight, and in a <sup>9</sup>narrow urn !  
 Alas ! how vain are all mine earlier cares,  
 How vain the welcome labours, which for thee  
 I oft endured ; for to thy mother's heart  
 Thou couldst not have been dearer than to mine.  
 Of all within I only was thy nurse,  
 And thou didst greet me with a sister's name—  
 But now these joys in one sad day are fled—  
 With thee retiring : all are swept away  
 Swift as the rushing of the winged blast.  
 My father is departed—I am lost—  
 And thou art with the dead—yet laugh our foes—  
 And our vile mother, from a mother's name  
 Estranged, is raving with unbridled joy—  
 Of whom in secret tidings didst thou pledge  
 Thyself the doomed Avenger, soon to come.

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<sup>9</sup> Ἐν σμικρῷ κύτει. Κύτος seems to signify any thing of a circular shape, and so may be applied to an urn. It is used by Æschylus to denote the rim, or outer circumference of a shield.

Οφίων δὲ πλεκταίαισι περίδρομον κύτος  
 Προσηδάφισται κοιλιγαστορος κύκλου.

Sept. c. Theb. 491.

Now thy stern fate, and mine, hath torn away.  
That hope for evermore, which brings me here  
When I had thought to clasp thy form beloved,  
But lifeless ashes and an empty shade.—

Woe for that breathless corpse—

Woe for that most ill-omened way,

Which brought thee hither thus!—

Thou hast undone me, O my dearest brother!

Thou hast indeed undone me! Therefore now  
Receive, receive me to thy narrow home.

To thee who now art nothing would I come

Who shall be nothing soon, in the cold grave

Henceforth to dwell together. While in life

I ever shared thy lot, and now in death

I ask but to partake thy sepulchre.

The dead, I see, are grieved no more for ever!

*Ch.* O think, Electra, mortal was thy sire,

And mortal thine Orestes—let not grief

Transport thee thus—it is our common lot,

The common birthright of our race to suffer.

*Or.* Alas! what shall I say?—words fail me  
here—

And yet no longer can I check their flow.

*Elec.* What grief is thine, and wherefore speak'st  
thou thus?

*Or.* Is thine the fair Electra's form renowned?

*Elec.* It is that form, though worn by many ills.

*Or.* This is indeed extremity of woe!

*Elec.* Why, stranger, thus dost thou lament my  
doom?

*Or.* O form by sorrow impiously defaced!

*Elec.* Such words, O stranger, paint my fate  
alone.

*Or.* Alas, thy life, unwedded and unblest!

*Elec.* Why, stranger, shouldst thou look upon  
my state

With grief like this?

*Or.* Nought knew I till this hour  
Of all my wretchedness.

*Elec.* How learn'st thou this  
From aught that I have uttered?

*Or.* I behold thee  
Conspicuous for thy sorrows.

*Elec.* Of my ills  
The part that meets thine eye is small indeed!

*Or.* What can be heavier than I now behold?

*Elec.* I am an inmate with the murderers—

*Or.* Of whom—what evils dost thou here imply?

*Elec.* My Father's murderers,—nor is this all—  
I am perforce their slave!

*Or.* Who of mankind  
To such a lot constrains thee?

*Elec.* She is called  
My mother—but with that endearing name  
No kindred claims!

*Or.* How doth she wrong thee thus?  
By violence or penury?

*Elec.* By all—  
By force—and penury—and all other ills.

*Or.* And is there none to succour and defend  
thee?

*Elec.* None. One I had, whose ashes thou hast  
brought.

*Or.* Ill-fated! with what pity I behold thee!

*Elec.* Now, be assured, thou only of mankind  
Hast pitied me!

*Or.* For I alone have come  
In sorrow for thine ills.

*Elec.* And art thou then  
With us connected by some kindred tie?

*Or.* If these around were friendly, I would tell  
thee.

*Elec.* They are; and thou wilt speak before the  
faithful.



*Or.* Give up that urn, that thou may'st learn the whole.

*Elec.* Nay, stranger, by the Gods, deprive me not Of this sad solace.

*Or.* To my bidding yield,  
And never wilt thou err.

*Elec.* Nay, as thou bear'st  
<sup>10</sup>A manly soul, leave all I hold most dear.

*Or.* Thou must not keep it—

*Elec.* Woe is me, Orestes!

If e'en thy tomb is wrested from my hands!

*Or.* Speak better omens, for thy tears are causeless.

*Elec.* Can tears, for a dead brother poured,  
be causeless?

*Or.* It ill befits thee to accost him thus.

*Elec.* And am I then unworthy of the dead?

*Or.* Of none art thou unworthy—but this part Imports thee not.

*Elec.* It does—if this sad urn

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<sup>10</sup> Literally, "by thy beard."

Contains the ashes of the loved Orestes.

*Or.* Not of Orestes, save in specious tale.

*Elec.* And where then is th' unhappy youth entombed?

*Or.* He hath no tomb; the living need it not.

*Elec.* What say'st thou, youth?

*Or.* I speak no falsehood here.

*Elec.* And does he live then?

*Or.* Aye, if I am living!

*Elec.* And art thou he?

*Or.* Inspect this <sup>1</sup> signet well—

<sup>1</sup> Σφραγίς. What this mark was has greatly puzzled the commentators; the Scholiast, whose conjectures are generally whimsical, will needs have it to be some remains of the ivory shoulder of Pelops, (Pind. Olymp. 1.) which was visible in all his descendants, as those of Cadmus were marked with a lance, and the Seleucidæ with an anchor. Camerarius and, after him, Brumoy call it a ring, or seal, which, indeed, is the most natural interpretation of the word σφραγίς; though it may be said in support of the other opinion, that the natural or bodily mark was more certain, and, therefore, a better proof of identity in regard to the person of Orestes.—Francklin. Euripides ascribes the discovery to a scar. It is certain, however, that the proper signification of σφραγίς is a seal, or signet, in which sense it is used in the Trachiniæ, where Deianira sends one as a token to Hercules.

It was my Father's—let it speak my truth.

*Elec.* O day most welcome!

*Or.* I attest, most welcome!

*Elec.* And do I hear thee?

*Or.* Aye, and none beside.

*Elec.* Do I indeed embrace thee?

*Or.* Yea—and thus

In these fond arms mayst thou for ever clasp me!

*Elec.* O friends, the dearest of my native land,  
Ye see, ye see Orestes, late deceased  
In art, and now by artifice preserved!

*Ch.* We see, my daughter—from our eyes the  
tears

Of answering rapture gush in copious stream.

STROPHE I.

*Elec.* Thou offspring dear!  
Offspring of him whom most I loved on earth!  
At length thou hast arrived,  
Found, reached, beheld, whom most thy soul desired.

*Or.* Yea, we are present;—yet be silent still.

*Elec.* And wherefore thus?—

*Or.* Silence is better, lest within they hear us.

*Elec.* Now by the chaste unconquered Artemis  
Thus never will I deign

Meanly to tremble at the woman-crowd,  
Which ever dwells within.

*Or.* Yet see, at least, how martial fire may burn  
In woman's breast—for this thyself hast proved.

*Elec.* Ah miserable me !  
Thou dost recall how deep a woe,  
Unveiled—incurable—devoid  
Of kind oblivion's balm,  
Was our sad doom to bear.

*Or.* This too I know, and, when the crisis calls,  
Will prove these deeds are present to our souls.

## ANTISTROPHE.

*Elec.* But every time,  
Yes, every time is meet, as it revolves,  
To speak of deeds like these—  
Scarce can I yet in freedom boldly speak.

*Or.* I too agree—what then thou hast, preserve.

*Elec.* And by what means?

*Or.* When time forbids, indulge not lengthened  
speech.

*Elec.* And who, when thou hast blessed my sight,  
such words  
For silence could exchange,  
Since I behold thee now, beyond all hope,

All promise, thus restored ?

*Or.* Thou saw'st me then, when Heaven inspired  
return.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Elec.* A more enlivening joy  
This word awakes than all I felt before,  
If hither Heaven's high will indeed  
Impelled thee to return :—  
This too from Heaven I deem.

*Or.* I would not check thy transports, yet I fear,  
By joy bewildered, thou wilt swerve from prudence.

EPODE.

*Elec.* O thou, so long an exile, who hast deigned  
Though late, with welcome coming to appear,  
Beholding me, long plunged in deepest woes,  
Ah do not—

*Or.* What?

*Elec.* O do not thou forbid  
The transport thus to gaze upon thy form.

*Or.* A joy is this, which none shall e'er forbid  
thee.

*Elec.* Dost thou assent?

*Or.* How should I not?

*Elec.* I, friends beloved, have heard

The welcome news I dared not hope to hear.—  
I cherished mute despair,  
Nor shrieked in anguish at the first sad tale;  
But now I have thee—I behold  
That countenance most dear,  
Which not in misery could I e'er forget.

*Or.* Omit th' indulgence of superfluous words,  
Nor vainly tell me of my mother's guilt,  
Nor how Ægisthus drains my father's store,  
Profusely wastes, or idly spends his wealth—  
A tale like this would waste th' important hour.  
But speak what most may suit our present aim,  
Where first appearing, or in ambush where,  
We best may quell our proud insulting foes.  
Beware too, lest thy mother should detect  
Thy brow more joyous, when we pass within,  
But, as for that fictitious woe, lament—  
When full success hath crowned us, then 'twill be  
The time in freedom to exult and laugh.

*Elec.* Since, O my brother, such is now thy  
will,  
It shall be mine no less—my present joys  
From thee, and not myself, are all derived;  
Nor would I cause thee trivial pain, to reap

A great advantage—thus I should not yield  
A due obedience to our favouring God.  
But all from hence thou know'st—how shouldst thou  
not?

Thou know'st Ægisthus is not now within,  
But there my mother is—and fear thou not  
She should behold my face illumed with smiles,  
My inward hatred burns within me still,  
Nor, since I have beheld thee, can I cease  
From tears of joy.—O how could I forbear,  
Who from one journey both believed thee dead  
And saw thee living? Yea, thou hast indeed  
Surpassed the limit of my wildest hope ;  
And should my father rise to life, no more  
Should I account it wondrous, but believe  
That I in truth beheld him. Wherefore then  
As in this path thou hast indeed arrived,  
Lead as thy soul directs, since I alone  
In two things ne'er had failed—or I had freed  
Myself with glory, or with glory died.

*Or.* Silence, I charge thee, for I hear the tread  
Of some proceeding from within—

*Elec.* Go in,

O strangers—tidings do ye bear which none

Might here reject, nor can with joy receive.

*Enter* ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT, ELECTRA, ORESTES, CHORUS.

*Att.* O most unwise, of prudence all bereft,  
Have ye no lingering thought nor care of life,  
And is no inborn caution in your souls,  
Unknowing where ye stand, while perils dire  
No longer menace, but enclose you round?  
Had I not long with timely caution kept  
The portal, all your plans within the house  
Had been detected, ere yourselves appeared.  
But o'er this danger have I promptly watched.  
Cease then this long and unavailing speech—  
These still insatiate clamours of delight.  
Enter within—delay is peril here—  
In deeds like this the crisis calls to action.

*Or.* How, if I enter now, is all within?

*Att.* Well.—There are none who know thine  
aspect there.

*Or.* Thou hast, as it behoved, announced my  
death?



*Att.* Know, here a man, thou'rt deemed but  
ashes there.

*Or.* Do they exult in this? or what their thoughts?

*Att.* When all is done, I'll tell thee,—now they  
deem

All well within—that most, which is not well.

*Elec.* Now by the Gods, my brother, who is  
this?

*Or.* Dost thou not know?

*Elec.* I bear him not in mind.

*Or.* Know'st thou to whose kind care thy hands  
consigned me?—

*Elec.* To whom? What say'st thou?

*Or.* By thy timely care

Whose hands conveyed me secretly to Phocis?

*Elec.* And is this he whom, at my father's death,  
Of all our train alone I faithful found?

*Or.* 'Tis he. Forbear to ask in many words.

*Elec.* <sup>2</sup> O dearest light—the sole preserver thou

<sup>2</sup> Φῶς. This word is capable of three significations:—1. The day, or light of day, which the ancients were accustomed to address on the reception of any welcome intelligence. 2. The countenance of the old man. 3. The man himself. The first is preferred by Scheffer, who quotes *Philoctetes*, 530.

Of Agamemnon's house, whence hast thou come?  
And art thou he who saved from many a woe  
My brother and myself? O hands beloved!  
O thou whose feet a welcome task fulfilled,  
How couldst thou thus delude me, nor reveal  
Thy form, but still distract me with thy words,  
While yet thy deeds were grateful to my soul?  
Hail, O my father, for I seem in thee  
To view a second father. Doubly hail!  
Know, in this single day, of all mankind  
Thee have I most abhorred and most beloved.

*Att.* Enough for me. Our intervening ills  
May be perchance the theme of future days,  
And then, Electra, thou shalt hear the whole.  
For you who now are present, 'tis the time  
To act—now Clytemnestra is alone.  
There is no man within—but if ye pause,  
Remember well, hereafter must ye fight  
With these, and mightier and more numerous foes.

*Or.* No more of lengthened conference—'tis the  
hour,  
My Pylades, for action—let us speed  
Within, adoring my paternal Gods,  
All who within this vestibule abide.

[*Exeunt* ORESTES, PYLADES, and ATTENDANT.]

## ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Elec.* Propitious, King Apollo, hear their prayer;  
Hear mine with theirs, who oft with suppliant  
hand

Have offered all my scanty store allowed.  
Now then, Lycæan Power, with all I can  
I ask—I kneel—I pray thee. Be to us  
A potent helper in this arduous deed;  
And show to man, what righteous recompense  
Of shameless guilt the vengeful Gods award.

## STROPHE I.

*Ch.* Behold, where breathing blood  
Of deadly strife Mars speeds his onward way;  
The hounds, who mark the guilty for their prey,  
Whom flight can ne'er elude,  
Are entering now the palace; and the cloud  
Of dark suspense, ere long, shall cease my dreams  
to shroud.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

Within these halls-unseen,  
Halls of his Father's wealth, with silent tread

He steals, the stern Avenger of the dead ;  
 And whetted now and keen  
 The sword he wields ;—while Hermes points the way,  
 His wile in darkness hides, and brooks no more delay.

## STROPHE II.

*Elec.* The warriors, friends beloved, will straight  
 perform

The deed within—meantime in silence wait.

*Ch.* And how ? what do they ?

*Elec.* For the funeral now,

A <sup>3</sup>cauldron she prepares—they stand beside.

*Ch.* And wherefore cam'st thou forth ?

*Elec.* To watch within,

Lest, unobserved, Ægisthus should escape.

*Cly.* Woe ! woe ! I die—I die ! O halls, [*Within.*  
 Vacant of friends, and filled with murderous foes !

*Elec.* One shrieks within—did ye not hear, my  
 friends ?

## STROPHE III.

*Ch.* I heard what none should hear,

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<sup>3</sup> An allusion to the funeral banquet, which was usually spread on the tomb of the deceased by the nearest relation.

And shuddered at the sound.

*Cly.* Wretch that I am! Ægisthus, where art thou?

*Elec.* Hark—hark—she shrieks again—

*Cly.* My son, my son! [Within.

Oh pity her who bare thee!

*Elec.* Yet on him

Thou hadst no pity—on his father none.

STROPHE IV.

*Ch.* O city!—O unhappy race!

Now, day by day, death wastes thee, wastes thee still.

*Cly.* Ah! I am wounded—

*Elec.* 'Strike, if thou hast power,  
A second blow.

*Cly.* Woe! woe! Again—again!

*Elec.* Soon may Ægisthus have like cause to shriek.

---

<sup>5</sup> Francklin endeavours to vindicate Electra from the severe censures of the French critics. In excusing Sophocles he has succeeded—but to justify Electra is impossible, even on the plea of fatality.

## STROPHE. V.

*Ch.* The curses are fulfilled—the dead  
 Entombed in dust revive—  
 And from their murderers now the copious stream  
 Of freshly flowing blood  
 The long-departed drain.

*Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.*

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

*Elec.* Now they are here—each hand is wet with  
 blood,  
 First sacrifice to Mars.—What should I say?—  
*Ch.* How hast thou sped, Orestes?  
*Or.* All is well  
 Within, if Phœbus hath predicted well.  
*Elec.* Is the unhappy dead?  
*Or.* Henceforth no more  
 Dread thou fresh insults from thy mother's hate.

\*

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## ANTISTROPHE III.

*Ch.* Cease, for I plainly now  
Discern Ægisthus near.

*Elec.* Speed, youths, retire.

*Or.* Dost thou behold the man  
Hastening to us ?

*Elec.* He from the suburbs comes,  
And comes rejoicing       \*       \*

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

## ANTISTROPHE IV.

*Ch.* Haste—through yon doors that front us—  
haste,  
Your former deed, in truth, was bravely done—  
And now for what remains—

*Or.* Be confident—  
We will achieve it.

*Elec.* Hasten, if thou'rt wise.

*Or.* Aye, I am gone.

[*Exeunt* ORESTES, &c.]

## ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Elec.* On me the rest devolves.

## ANTISTROPHE V.

*Ch.* Better, I ween, to lull his ear  
With mildly whispered words ;  
That all unheeding, headlong he may plunge  
Into those latent snares  
Which vengeance now hath laid !

*Enter ÆGISTHUS.*

ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

*Æg.* Which of you knows where now the  
Phocians are,  
Charged with the tidings of Orestes' death,  
Who perished mid the wrecks of rival cars?  
Thee, thee I ask—whom I so long have found  
Perverse—such news thine interest most import,  
And thou from clearest knowledge canst inform me.

*Elec.* I know—how should I not? else had I  
been  
Blind to the wreck of all my dearest hopes.

*Æg.* Inform me, then, where are the strangers  
now?



*Elec.* Within—for a kind hostess have they found.

*Æg.* And do they bring sure tidings of the dead?

*Elec.* To sight they show it, not in words alone.

*Æg.* Can we, too, prove it by undoubted signs?

*Elec.* Thou canst—there is a mournful sight  
within.

*Æg.* Thy words—not as thou’rt wont—awake  
my joy.

*Elec.* Joy then, if such a sight indeed be joyous.

*Æg.* Command ye silence, and unfold the gates  
For Argos and Mycenæ to behold ;—  
That, if among them haply some indulge  
Vain hopes of his return, they here may see  
The breathless corpse, and curb their insolent  
speech ;

Ere wisdom to their cost too late they learn,  
When our just wrath chastise their bold presumption.

*Elec.* Now shall my part be done. I too have  
learnt

At length the wisdom to revere my Lords.

*Æg.* ‘ O Jove, a sight I view that well hath  
chanced,

---

‘ It was the office of Ægisthus, as a near relative, to

If thus to speak be lawful—but my words,  
If Nemesis be present, I recal.  
Now from the corpse the covering veil remove,  
That I may mourn above my kinsman's bier.

*Or.* Do thou remove it. 'Tis thy part, not  
mine,

Gazing on this, t' accost it as a friend.

*Æg.* Nay—but thou counsell'st well, and I obey;—  
Call Clytemnestra, if she be within.

*Or.* Herself is near thee. Seek her not else-  
where.

*Æg.* O what a sight is this!

*Or.* Whom dost thou fear,  
Whom know'st thou not?

*Æg.* Into th' insidious snares  
Of what false men unhappy have I fallen?

*Or.* What—seest thou not that they are living  
still

---

lament over the body of Orestes—on the contrary he expresses an indecent joy; this was an insult to the dead: he recollects himself, and, apprehensive of the vengeance of Nemesis, determines upon a friendly address to the deceased.—Potter.

Whom thou wert now addressing as the dead?

*Æg.* Alas! I know thy meaning—it must be  
That he who thus accosts me is himself  
The true Orestes.

*Or.* Most sagacious prophet!—  
Thy science failed just now.

*Æg.* Ah, I am lost—  
But let me speak, though brief must be my words.

*Elec.* Nay, by the Gods, my brother, let him  
speak

No more—nor idly lengthen out his words!  
How should a brief delay avail the wretch  
In ills entangled, and to death consigned?  
Be instant death his meed—and give his corpse  
To those whose task is to inter the dead,  
‘With rites that suit his crimes, of us unseen.  
For all my former injuries this alone  
A meet and due atonement do I deem.

*Or.* Go thou at once within—the contest now  
Is not of words—thy life is on the die.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ægisthus* and *Clytemnestra* were buried without the walls, these murderers being thought unworthy of a tomb in the place where *Agamemnon* lay.—Potter, from *Pausanias*.

*Æg.* Why lead me then within? Why, if the deed

Be done with honour, is there need of darkness?

Is not thy hand e'en now prepared to slay me?

*Or.* Command not thus, but to the spot proceed  
‘Where thou didst shed my murdered father’s blood—  
There shall thine own be poured.

*Æg.* Are then these halls  
For ever destined to behold the ills  
Of Pelops’ race, the present and the future?

*Or.* Aye, thine at least,—I am the prophet here.

*Æg.* But no paternal office dost thou vaunt—

*Or.* Thou answer’st much to lengthen out the  
way—

But haste.—

*Æg.* Do thou precede.

*Or.* Thou shalt go first.

*Æg.* Fear’st thou I should escape thee?

*Or.* I but fear

---

‘ This example of retributive justice will remind the reader of a similar instance in holy writ—“ In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.” 1 Kings, xxi. 19.

Lest thou should'st die with pleasure. Duty bids  
That I should keep Death bitter to thy soul :  
And well it were did instant vengeance smite  
The wretch, presuming to transgress the laws,  
For then would villany abound no more.

*Ch.* O race of Atreus, through what countless  
woes

Hast thou to freedom wrought thine arduous way,  
By this fierce act fulfilled !

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